

## Promise and Command

King of Glory Lutheran Church

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Holy Trinity Sunday: Year A: Mt 28:16-20, June 3-4, 2023

<sup>16</sup>Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. <sup>17</sup>When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. <sup>18</sup>And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. <sup>19</sup>Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, <sup>20</sup>and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

*I am with you always. Go and tell.*

Beloved of God, may God's true grace and peace be with us this day. Amen.

Jesus and the eleven disciples are back in Galilee where it all began. He is about to leave them. They are up high on a mountain, where, you'll remember in the Bible, geographically are always the times when something special happens.

The disciples are a bit shaken up. Judas betrayed their beloved rabbi. Now Judas is gone and Jesus is, well...back. His resurrection has been amazing, astonishing, and confusing to say the least. So there, on the mountain they worshipped and some doubted. Now Jesus is going to leave them again?

Before He ascends into heaven, Jesus preaches a short sermon. It is traditionally called the Great Commission. Rev. Dr. David Lose calls it the Great Promise, as Jesus says, "I am with you always, to the end of the age."

If ever we needed to hear that promise, now is the age, now is that time and day. Listen and let it sink into your soul. Our sweet Lord, promises, "I am with you always."

You and I know that relationships are complex. God in God's wisdom, knew that we shouldn't be alone. Friendships, families, spouses, neighbors and church members become the people that we count on in this journey called life. We've come to know these people over time. We've had conversations: deep ones and silly ones. We've spent quality time together making memories. Laughing.

We also know that at times, those relationships become a burden. They get messy. Mis-understandings happen. Feelings get hurt. Jobs and even death take away the people we care the most about.

Therefore, what a promise...what a gift from our faithful God. "I am with you always." For the disciples, that meant right now. For us it means right now too. And tomorrow. And next week, next month and next year. Jesus promises to be with us always.

It is present tense and future tense. I am here. I promise. I will show up, and keeping showing up, when others surround you and when others leave you. I will show up – for you! That is my vow, Jesus says.

Do you know that? Can you feel that? Do you believe that Jesus stands next to you at the kitchen sink when you're washing dishes at the end of a long day? Do you believe that Jesus is sitting at the conference table with the boss and the other company managers? What about when we're watching TV or mowing the lawn? When we work for justice and buy food for our hungry neighbors. Do we believe that Jesus is with us right now during worship?

Jesus is here, right now with us. With you. With countries at war. With refugees. With people in prison and in hospitals. With people who are dying and people who are grieving. I am with you always.

Babies around the age of 7 months begin to have separation anxiety. If a toy gets taken away, they think it doesn't exist. If mom or dad walks into the next room, babies think they are gone forever. Before our 8<sup>th</sup> month of life, we have no short term memory. Babies cannot understand that if they cannot see a toy or a parent, it still exists, it's simply not in front of them.

Thank goodness we grow out of that stage! God in God's goodness created a way for Jesus to be with us even when we cannot see Him. The Triune God exists – one God in three persons. God the Father, Creator: continues to create each new day, each sunset, raindrop, bunny rabbit, and baby. The Holy Spirit comes as our advocate and sustainer, whispering guidance and support. God the Son, the one with skin on: showed us most clearly who God is and promised to be here – now.

It is my prayer for our community of faith, that this promise brings us deep, abiding hope. Deep joy. Encouragement! Because we too, like the disciples, go through times in life of amazement, confusion, struggle and happiness!

From this place of faith-filled wonder, we are ready to hear the first portion of Jesus' sermon on the mountain. "Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them and teaching them."

Now before you think, "Oh I can't do that!" just listen for another minute. Someone told you about God, or else you wouldn't be sitting here. Is that true? Yes. It was a grandmother, or parent, or neighbor or pastor, or friend. We are not all called to knock on doors and make cold calls. We are not all called to be missionaries in other countries. God knows that.

What God knows is the circle must get bigger and bigger. First it began with twelve. Then more and more people heard about Jesus' ministry and found healing and peace. The early church in the book of Acts is all about expanding Jesus' ministry to more and more peoples regardless of where they lived.

We are to be like the early church. Go and tell. Show and tell is great. Go and tell is even better. Right now, think of that person or people who first told you about God and God's love. Offer up a prayer of thanks for them.

Now, let's take a moment to practice in a really safe space. I'm inviting you to turn to the person sitting next to you. Tell them two things. 1. What is comforting about Jesus' promise to be with you? 2. One person to whom you could say, "God is with me." Or "God loves you." Who in your life, right now needs to be reassured that God is with them or loves them? Family member who doesn't go to church? Neighbor who is struggling? The promise brings us joy. Our response to the command is to go and tell. Let's do it, church! Amen.