

TRINITY SUNDAY - Making Disciples of All Nations (English)

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Date: 05 February 2012

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[0 : 00] Well, friends, it's very good to see you all here this morning, and I'm sorry those of you who can't see my face right up the back, but it is good, I can see yours, it's very good to see you.

Let us pray. Father, we pray that you would help us to understand your word today. Please help us to hear it carefully. Please help us to obey your word for the glory of your son, and we pray this in his name.

Amen. Friends, I have been your pastor here for about 20 months now. Let me tell you that for the first six months, I was trying to get to know you and just survived taking on this large parish, particularly since Wayne left within six weeks of my arriving.

In the second six months, I began to analyse where we were as a church and to find a new associate minister. In the third six months, I began to think about where we were going as a church.

And in that time, I found myself increasingly thinking about the passage that we are going to look at today. The passage is Matthew 28, verses 16 to 20. Please turn to it with me in your Bibles.

[1 : 16] Now, the first thing you need to understand about these verses is to remember the context. In Matthew 27, we hear about the death of Jesus. He is crucified, that is, he dies.

He is buried. But then he is raised. And look back to the beginning of chapter 28. Two women go to the tomb. There is an earthquake. The angel of the Lord descends from heaven.

The stone is rolled back from the tomb. And I love this next bit. And the angel sits on the stone. And the guards are stunned. And the angel speaks to the woman in verse 5. And in verse 16, the disciples obey Jesus.

They go to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. They see him and they worship him. But some doubt. This is the most immediate context for this passage. However, there is a much larger context that we need to think about.

You see, what is about to happen is not just the culmination of the life and death and resurrection of Jesus. It is the culmination of the whole story of the Bible. The culmination of the whole purposes of God.

[2 : 16] Let me explain. You see, when you open the first page of your Bible, you find that God is a creator. He creates all things. He is the creator of all the universe. The creator of all human beings. And then the humans that he creates choose to live in independence and rebellion from him.

They sin. That is, they break relationship with God. And the story of the Bible is how God sets out to restore relationship. And he does so by choosing one man and his descendants.

In chapter 12 of Genesis, God chooses Abraham. And then he says that through Abraham, he will bless the whole world. In other words, through Abraham, God will bring the whole world back into relationship with him.

Genesis 18 verse 18 puts it this way. God says, Abraham shall become a great and mighty nation and all nations of the earth shall be blessed in him.

Can you see, God's purpose is to bless all nations of the world through Abraham. Well, from Abraham comes Isaac. From Isaac comes Jacob. From Jacob come the 12 tribes of Israel.

[3 : 18] From the tribe of Judah comes King David. And from King David comes Jesus of Nazareth. This Jesus is the one who has died, been buried, been raised and now stands before his disciples.

Can you see what I'm saying? This Jesus who stands before his disciples is the descendant of Abraham. He is also the true human being, the son of man. He is also the true Davidic ruler, the son of God.

In him all the promises of God to Abraham have been fulfilled. He is God's yes to all the promises of God. This is the person standing before his disciples. And it's this Jesus who says the words in verse 18.

Look at them with me. Jesus says to his disciples these words which Esther will read to us and you can follow in English. Friends, when you look at this statement, it is an astonishing statement.

It is a comprehensive statement. You see, Jesus is echoing Daniel chapter 7. He is saying that he is the son of man talked about in Daniel chapter 7. He is the one to whom God gives all dominion, all glory, all kingship.

[4 : 24] His dominion is an everlasting dominion. His kingship is one that will never be destroyed. Jesus is saying he is God's eternal king. He has authority over all human rulers and authorities.

He has authority over all physical powers, whether they are friendly to God or not. He has authority over all spiritual forces of good and evil. He has authority over everyone and everything.

Look at verse 18 again. Jesus says all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. You see, God has highly exalted this Jesus. He has given him a name that is above every other name.

Jesus is the one who has the keys of death and hell of life and heaven. He is the one who can forgive sin. The one who can give life. The one who can bring us to God. He is the one to whom God entrusts the future.

My future and the future of all the world. He is prince and saviour. All authority has been given to him. Friends, it is very easy for us to have a view of God that is too small.

[5 : 24] But if I can say this, it is impossible to have a view of Christ that is too large. Jesus Christ has been given a name and an authority that is above all names and all authority. And this is the Jesus who stands before his disciples here in this passage.

So let us hear what he has to say. Because his words to his disciples are words to all disciples in all history. They are the words of God to us who believe in Jesus.

Let us therefore listen to what he has to say. And the first word is go. But it is followed with another word linked to another word. And that word is the word make. So we have go and make.

And in the original language, the emphasis of the command by Jesus is not so much on going, but on the command to make. They are to make disciples of all nations. In other words, as the disciples go, they are to go to all nations and to have their aim, have the aim of replicating themselves.

They, the disciples of Jesus, are to make disciples of Jesus. And they are to make them from all the nations of the earth. Now please understand this. In other words, it is not only through Abraham and Jesus that all nations of the earth are blessed.

[6 : 34] It is through the disciples of Jesus that all the nations will be blessed. And they'll be blessed because the disciples of Jesus will make disciples of all nations. Friends, for many years we here at Holy Trinity have made disciples by letting people come to us.

And when they come to us, we make disciples of them. And sometimes we have gone to them and drawn them in. But our Chinese congregations have given us an example of the sorts of things we need to be doing more.

We need to go out to our community. This may mean physically going to our neighbour. Or it may mean providing some place or event or occasion where we can have contact with them. One example is our ESL classes.

These are a means by which we can not only provide a social service to our community, but which also opens up the possibility of hearing about Jesus. Friends, Jesus is commanding us here.

You see, these disciples are being commanded to make disciples. They're being commanded to replicate themselves. And that means that those who are disciples go and make disciples.

[7 : 33] So generation after generation after generation of Christians are to go and make disciples. So are you a disciple of Jesus? Are we all disciples of Jesus? If so, then we too are to make disciples of Jesus.

So how do you go about making disciples of Jesus? Well, the first thing you must do is initiate them into the faith. That is, bring them to know God. And I think that's what verse 19 means. I'm not sure myself that it immediately refers to baptism in water.

And if you want to talk to me about this later, that's fine. That is immersing them into the name of or into God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. Now this may be symbolised in baptism and symbolised in baptism in the name of Jesus.

However, baptism doesn't convert people. Baptism does not make people Christian. It is rather the symbol that people have become Christian. And I think, again, a good example of this happens within our Chinese congregation.

Let me go through the process with you. The first point of contact with Christian faith may occur through ESL or through a Christian friend. There may be the Chinese Alpha course. And in that course, the person is introduced to God and to Jesus.

[8 : 37] They are taught the Christian faith. They are immersed in God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit. And before long, they decide that this faith is for them. They become Christian disciples. And this is symbolised by them being baptised.

By the way, for those who are English speakers here, if you've never come to one of our Chinese baptism services, come to one. Every year we have 40 or more people who are baptised here. It is so exciting.

For this is what God is about in his world. Now, the Christian faith does not stop with being introduced to God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit. Look at verse 20. Look at what Jesus says. He says that part of making disciples of all nations involves teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.

Friends, within Matthew's Gospel, we hear Jesus use a special term for a disciple. He calls disciples little ones. You can see this in Matthew 10 verse 42. In other words, they are children.

And children are people who have everything to learn. Friends, none of us comes into Christian faith mature. Everyone comes to Christian faith as a child. And a child is to learn.

[9 : 38] And those who are already disciples are to help them learn. And they help them learn by teaching them. They teach them to listen to God. But look at verse 20 again. We are told what they are to teach.

They are to teach disciples to obey all that Jesus commanded. You see, Christian education is not just simply about giving information. It's not just about teaching people about the content of Scripture.

It's not just teaching them facts about God. Teaching is very practically oriented. It is to teach them to obey. Our teaching is to change lives. It is to result in obedience.

Please notice this. True Christian faith results in obedience. In other words, we cannot claim to be Christian if there is no change in our lives. Christian faith is designed to change lives.

It is designed to make people obedient to God. So let me ask every one of you here today and myself. Has your Christian faith changed you? How has it changed you? Has it changed your life at home?

[10 : 36] Has it changed your life at work? Has it changed the way that you speak? Has it changed the way you relate to your husband or your wife or your children or your parents? Has it changed your goals in life?

Has it changed your goals in life for your children and grandchildren? Has it changed the way you spend your money? Has it changed the way you treat your employees? Friends, in the New Testament, we hear constantly that it is meant to change all of these things.

Jesus makes this clear elsewhere in Matthew's Gospel. He speaks of disciples and he says that they are those who do the will of his Father in heaven. Disciples of Jesus hear, understand and obey the teaching of Jesus.

Now before we look a little more at verse 20, I want you to notice what Jesus has said in these verses and that it works in two directions. First of all, it looks outwards. It tells us that we are to look outwards to all nations.

We are to look outwards to our neighbour and we are to reach out and tell them about God. Friends, one of the joys of this particular day is to see so many different nations represented here.

[11 : 40] Sorry Esther, I've gone from the notes. So many nations and this is part of the Gospel reaching out to all nations. And to meet together is a little snapshot of heaven where all nations will be gathered together around God and his Son.

So we look outwards and second it looks inwards. Jesus tells us that we are to look at those who are already believers in Jesus and we are to teach them. And our teaching is to help people to be put into practice what Jesus has commanded.

You see, if we are not reaching out to others, we are disobedient, not doing what Jesus commands. And if we are not teaching people to be obedient to Jesus, we are disobedient, not doing what Jesus commands.

But now let's turn to the final words of Jesus here. Do you remember the beginning of Matthew's Gospel? We're told that God fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah. And that prophecy was that a virgin would conceive and bear a son.

And that child would be called Emmanuel, which means God with us. Well, Jesus is that child. Jesus is Emmanuel. Jesus is God with us. We are told this at the beginning of Matthew's Gospel.

[12:45] Now look at the end of Matthew's Gospel. Look at what Jesus says to his disciples. Look at what he says to us, his disciples. He says, remember, I am with you always to the end of the age. Literally this says, behold, I am with you all the days until the end of the age.

Friends, it is very difficult. It's hard to conceive of words more comforting and cheering than these words. The Christ we see paraded in this Gospel is with us. The Christ who was forever with God, but who became a man.

The Christ who was promised in the Old Testament Scriptures. The Christ who was declared by God to be his beloved son. The Christ who withstood the devil. The Christ who saw people as sheep without a shepherd and who cared for them and shepherded them.

The Christ who taught them. The Christ who went to the cross for them. The Christ who rose from the dead for them. This Christ is with us. This Emmanuel.

With us to forgive. With us to pardon. With us to make us holy. With us to strengthen us. With us to keep us. With us to lead us. With us to guide us.

[13:48] With us to equip us for making disciples. With us to help us do what he commands. With us in sorrow and in joy. With us in sickness and in health. With us in grief and rejoicing.

With us in life, in death, in time and in eternity. Christ with us, the hope and assurance of glory. He is Emmanuel, God with us.

Prince, in these verses we have seen Jesus give instructions to his eleven disciples. However, I want you to notice that here they are not so much apostles, but disciples. And as disciples, he tells them that they are to make disciples.

In other words, they are to make disciples who are like them. They are to make disciples who in turn make disciples. Now, I don't think we can dodge this passage. It is binding on all disciples. It binds them to make others like themselves.

Disciples of Jesus. So let me speak to each one of you as an individual. These words from Jesus to his eleven are words to each one of us. They are words from the one who has been given authority over heaven and on earth.

[14:54] They therefore come with all the authority of God. And God says to you, go and make disciples of all nations. Baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son, of the Holy Spirit.

And teach them to obey everything I have commanded you. Friends, this is God's word to you about your life before him. Be a person who makes disciples of Jesus. So you are not to keep your knowledge of Jesus to yourself.

You are to communicate it to others. You are not to keep God to yourself. You are to communicate him to others. It is the bound and duty of all Christians, including you, to do all you can to make disciples of Jesus.

You can do it in your personal communication and friendships. You can do it in your prayer life. You can aim to have people acquainted with God, the Father, God, the Son, God, the Holy Spirit. Immerse them in this Trinitarian God.

Teach them. Teach them to obey Jesus in everything he commands. And teach them that Jesus is with them even until the end of the age. Finally, let me turn to us as a whole church.

[15:50] See, those of us who are Christians are disciples of Jesus. And since I've arrived here to be your lead pastor, I've been grappling with how we move ahead. And last year we got to the final stage of defining just who we were and what's going to characterize us.

And we shaped a mission statement. And it's largely based on this passage. And our mission statement is this, which in time I'll have translated into Mandarin for you. Me? No, well, Esther will do it today, but later on we'll put it in writing as well.

Our mission statement is this, to prayerfully grow and make disciples of Jesus. Let me say it again. Our mission, our task, our mission under God is to prayerfully grow and make disciples of Jesus.

Friends, we believe on the basis of this passage that this is who God wants us to be. More than that, it's who God commands us to be. And so I want, in particular, this year to be a year where the focus is on evangelism.

Well, this year we're going to have special training in evangelism during the year. We're going to seek to have special events for evangelism. We're going to continue some of the fine evangelistic efforts that we already do.

[16:58] And at the same time, we're going to continue teaching God's people and encouraging each other to be obedient to Jesus. However, our special emphasis will be on evangelism. So please, I'm asking you to be very prayerful for these things.

Please take these commands from Jesus and pray that we'll be a church full of individuals who are disciples of Jesus. And remember the promise of Jesus. It's a promise for this year and it's a promise for eternity.

Jesus says, behold, I'm with you all the days until the end of the age. Let us pray. Father, we thank you that in Jesus you are with us.

Thank you that you have made us disciples of him. Please, we pray, help us to be obedient to his commands. And particularly, help us to be obedient to his command to make disciples of all nations.

Father, please make us a whole church which is devoted to bringing the word of Jesus to those around us. And please, Father, by your mercy, grant us that many may come to know Jesus this coming year.

[17:59] And please give us everything that we need in order to help them to teach all that Jesus has commanded. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Thanks, Esther. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.