

Sermon for Trinity Sunday 2020

18 And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19 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, 20 teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age." John 28. 18-20



Trinity Sunday is with us again. The Trinity of God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, is for us one of the greatest mysteries of our faith. We may try to dissect it. We may try to pick it apart with our logical thinking. In the end we finish where we began. The Trinity of God is a mystery.

Throughout the gospels we are advised over and over, by Jesus, that he and the Father are one. He states quite definitely that he has the authority of the Father. He teaches that he is obedient to the Father and that he only teaches that which the Father teaches. Finally, he speaks of the Holy Spirit as a common link contained equally within the relationship of the Father and Jesus.

It seems to me that throughout scripture we are being called into relationship with God. We add to this that we are to Love God and we are to love each other. I am reminded of a saying recalled from my youth, *"Love makes the world go round"*. The binding force that holds the Trinity of God together is love. The swirling, colourful, delightful, scene is that of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit in such a wonderful dance with each other that when we look to God, we simply see that one image of the Three in pure dance. It is like looking at the spokes of a bicycle wheel. When someone rides past, we do not see individual spokes. What we see is the wheel spinning so fast that the spokes all blur together. This is an image, an insight, into the Trinity of God.

This is the message that Jesus brings among us. In the first instance we are to love God with all that we are, and we are to love our neighbour as we love ourselves. Today this is extended into something new and exciting. Today we read in the gospel the command to go and baptise all nations in the name of the Trinity of God. We baptise with that formula of, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.



When we read of this commission to the disciples, we are reminded that the church was never meant to be a static thing. The church was never meant to be a closed club to which similar thinking people belong. The church was never meant to be legalistic and governed by antiquated rules and laws.

The church of God must be a living being with a determination to take the good news of salvation in Christ and to share it with the people of the world. All people of all nations are to hear of the wonderful news that is ours in Jesus Christ. We are to baptise, and we are to teach. This is not a static activity, but rather it is a life-giving exercise of hope and of salvation.

When Jesus commissioned the disciples, he began by stating that all authority in heaven and earth had been given to him. As he commissioned the disciples, he brought them into this authority. He shared his authority with them so that as they went out into the community to baptise and to teach, Jesus was with them and within them. It is a reminder that we do nothing in our own power and authority. We too live and work within the authority of heaven and earth as offered by our Lord.

It is unfortunate that many clergy, and therefore many parishes, have begun operating only in some form of maintenance mode. We maintain that which is with us and despair as the congregation dwindles and becomes a small, overworked, core of faithful people. The thought of going out and baptising and teaching has become for some a foreign and frightening thing. And yet, with the disciples, this is something that we are commanded to do in scripture. This is something that Jesus instructs us to do.

As we read the gospels we find that there are two significant commands. The first is that of Holy Communion. At the Last Supper Jesus took bread and broke it and gave it to the disciples while explaining that this bread is his body. He shared a cup of wine with them and explained that it is his blood. His command is that we are to partake of these elements as a remembrance of him.

The sacrament of Holy Communion is the source of great spiritual strength and conviction. The Body and the Blood of Christ is our spiritual food and as such it feeds our very soul. When we gather for worship and, as part of that worship, we hold out our hands to receive our spiritual food, we know that we are receiving it as a blessing and as a command. The final blessing of the church service is a charge to take the message of salvation out into the world and to share it.

It follows logically that when we are sent out into the world the second command from Jesus is activated. We are to baptise all people in the name of God, and we are to teach that salvation is a gift given through the sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ.



The only effective way to spread this message is through the quality of love. It is love of other people that will help them to be receptive to the message we bring. We have all seen the zealot in the street waving a bible around while declaring that everyone will burn in the depths of hell if they do not believe that which the person holding the bible believes. It is not so much a call to believe the scripture as it is a demand that we accept their interpretation of it. Invariably there is not much love offered with the demand. "Believe what I believe or spend eternity in hell". Personally, I do not find this to be a very positive way to teach salvation in Christ.

It is much better that we offer the love of Christ in our words and in our actions. The old saying is that words are cheap. We can say anything we want and still avoid responsibility. The other old saying that comes to mind is that actions speak louder than words. It is a combination of word and action that will bring sound results as we obediently set out to baptise and to teach.

We may ponder the circumstances of the world at this time. We are in the midst of a pandemic. People are falling ill, and far too many people are dying. There is racial unrest with people intentionally stirring up violence and conflict. The temptation is to hide under our bed and hope that it all goes away. As people of faith it is for us to be an example of love and understanding. We are to offer hope and reconciliation. We are to cast off prejudice and hatred. And we are to love all people as our Lord loves them. We do not even have to like them, but we are to love them.

Hiding under the bed, metaphorically speaking, will never achieve a positive outcome. When Jesus commissioned the disciples, it was with the authority of the triune God. our commission is no less important. We must always think of the church as being a living organism which is determined to baptise, to teach, and to grow. Every person who is baptised now has that command from our Lord in our Heart. It is for us to obey and to teach with love and compassion.