

Trinity Sunday – June 11, 2017
Good Shepherd Ev. Lutheran Church
Pastor Charles Heup
Matthew 28:16-20

Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. 17) When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. 18) Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19) Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20) and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

In the name of our Triune God,

Have you ever gone on a retreat? There are teen retreats, marriage retreats, weekend retreats and even business retreats. Retreats allow participants an opportunity to build relationships or to enhance their skills. Sometimes they provide an opportunity to reflect on the past and to ponder the future.

A couple of years ago one of our friends went on a silent retreat – it was hosted by a Christian organization and was intended to give participants an opportunity to spend some quiet time with the Lord.

In our text, Jesus' disciples retreated from the hustle and bustle of Jerusalem and headed to a mountainside in Galilee. **Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go.** It seems like our text is offering us the opportunity to

Theme: Spend Some Time with Jesus

1. To reflect on his divine authority
2. To ponder his divine love

The events of this text took place in the 40 days following Jesus' resurrection from the dead. During that time period, he showed himself alive to his disciples and prepared them for his impending ascension into heaven where he would rule over all things for the benefit his church as it uses the sword of the Spirit to add more and more souls to his kingdom and family. As those 40 days were drawing to a close Jesus had instructed his disciples to go to Galilee. **Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. 17) When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. 18) Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.**

Jesus had invited these disciples to go on a retreat with him so he could prepare them to be his witnesses. He reminded them -- **"All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me."**

As we ponder Jesus authority, we will recall that Jesus flashed glimpses of his divine authority during his earthly ministry even though he had willingly humbled himself to become a human being.

After Jesus spoke the words of the Sermon on the Mount – Matthew tells us that the crowds were amazed because Jesus taught as one who had authority and not as their teachers of the Law. Jesus' words carried with them a divine authority – they were the powerful teachings of God.

In the days following the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus healed a man with leprosy with his touch and the authority of his Word. A Roman Centurion sought Jesus' help because his beloved servant was paralyzed and suffering. He asked Jesus to say the word and his servant would be healed. He understood the divine authority of Jesus. When Jesus arrived at Peter's house, people brought individuals who were demon possessed and he drove out the spirits with a word.

Because Jesus wanted to escape the crowds who were surrounding him, he entered a boat with his disciples and they set sail across the Sea of Galilee. A sudden storm came up on the lake and the waves swept over the boat. But Jesus was asleep. The frantic disciples woke him and asked him to save them from drowning. They understood his divine power and authority. He said to waves, "Quiet! Be Still!" Immediately it became calm to the amazement of the disciples who wondered why even the wind and waves had to obey him. (cf. Mark 4:35ff.)

When he arrived at the other side he was met by two men who were possessed by demons. The demons addressed Jesus as the Son of God and begged Jesus to send them into a herd of pigs if he was going to cast them out of the man. Jesus said, "Go." And the demons departed the man and entered the herd of pigs. (Cf. Matthew 8:28)

One time when Jesus was in Jerusalem near the pool of Bethesda, he saw a man who had been an invalid for 38 years lying beside the pool. **Jesus said to him, "Get up! Pick up your mat and walk." At once the man was cured...** (John 5:8-9 NIV) Jesus explained his actions to the Jews who accused him of violating the Sabbath command by saying, **"My Father is always at his work to this very day, and I, too am working."** (John 5:7) The Jews tried to kill Jesus because he was making himself equal with God.

On another occasion, Jesus was in a house surrounded by crowds of people. Some men went up to the rooftop of that house, made a hole in a roof and lowered their paralyzed friend into the house where Jesus was. **When Jesus saw their faith, he said, "Friend, your sins are forgiven." 21) The Pharisees and the teachers of the law began thinking to themselves, "Who is this fellow who speaks blasphemy? Who can forgive sins but God alone?" 22) Jesus knew what they were thinking and asked, "Why are you thinking these things in your hearts? 23) Which is easier: to say, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Get up and walk'? 24) But I want you to know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins." So he said to the paralyzed man, "I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home." 25) Immediately he stood up in front of them, took what he had been lying on and went home praising God.** (Luke 5:20-25 NIV)

Shortly before his own sufferings and death, Jesus was summoned to help his friend Lazarus who had fallen ill. Jesus waited two days before responding. During that time, Lazarus died. By the time Jesus arrived, he had been in the grave for four days. Jesus stood outside the tomb, said a prayer to his father so that the people might believe he had been sent by God and called out in a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out." And the dead man came out of the tomb. (cf. John 11)

Before Jesus spoke the words of his great commission, he wanted his disciples to understand that he had divine authority. **Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.** Jesus had the right to do whatever he pleased with what he had been given. He had been given the right and the ability to use all things in heaven and on earth as the exalted Son of God.

This is a real power – it is a power before which God's enemy and ours the Devil must flee. It is a power which fills people with fear. Yet it is also the power to forgive sins and to overcome death, Jesus assured his followers in Galilee of his authority to reassure them and to encourage them for the work they had to do.

As the Scriptures foretold he had suffered but the prince of this world had no hold on him. Not even death could hold the one who is the resurrection and the life. Now the time has come to preach repentance and the forgiveness of sins in his name to all the nations so Jesus said: **go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20) and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."**

This command give us the opportunity to ponder Jesus' great love. Jesus conquered sin, death and the devil and now he wants all men to come to an understanding of this truth so that they can be saved through faith in him. In love for the world he entrusted his disciples with the authority to make disciples of all nations – using his authoritative word and name to baptize and teach. And he assured his disciples that he would always be with them.

As we reflect on Jesus' authority and ponder his love, we are reminded that Jesus has also called us to be his witnesses. Jesus divine authority stands behind the work he has assigned us to do. We are working with him and for him. And so we realize that it will be Jesus who will receive the glory and the praise and the honor from those who will become his disciples as a result of the work that we do. One look at the world tells us that there is work to be done – people whom Jesus loved are lost and dying in sin. And Jesus has the power and authority to do something about it.

Under the divine authority of Jesus, you and I have been commissioned together with all other believers with a wonderful work. Jesus said, "**All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.** Then Jesus said **19) Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20) and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.**

With his divine authority, the Lord Jesus has chosen the tools that he wants us to use as we make disciples of all nations. He's told us where to work and when. The time is now, the place is the world – starting right in our own families and backyards. The tools are baptism and his teachings – we often call the tools the Means of Grace – the Gospel in word in Sacrament.

Like most men I get a charge out of using power tools – but sometimes (and I hope you won't betray my secret) I get a little intimidated by some of them. Well, talk about power tools. That's what Jesus has given to us with the Gospel. The apostle Paul says (**Romans 1:16**) **I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile.**

With the divine tools, the Lord has given us we can blast away at hearts hardened by sin – knocking down the walls of pride and self-righteousness. We can lay a solid foundation as an expert builder – just like Paul who proclaimed (1 Corinthians 3:10-11) **By the grace God has given me, I laid a foundation as an expert builder, and someone else is building on it. But each one should be careful how he builds. 11) For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ.**

But let's face it, (I won't betray your secret), sometimes are we a bit timid when it comes to using the divine tools that Jesus has entrusted to us? We tend to leave the baptizing and the teaching to those whom we have called as experts – almost as if we were afraid to trust that Jesus knew what he was doing when he entrusted us to work with him and for him.

The command to baptize is given to all. Any Christian can perform a baptism by taking simple water and applying it in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit as Jesus instructed in our text. This act seems simple enough but God is in work in it to wash away sin, to stir up faith and to bring little children into his family. Because we want to do things in a decent and orderly fashion the members of our congregation normally agree to have the pastor perform the baptisms of their children – but there would be times especially if the babies' life were in jeopardy that it would be vital for someone else to do the baptism.

As a part of the baptismal ceremonies in our congregation, the parents and the members of this congregation promise to do what they can to teach those who have been baptized everything that Jesus has taught us. It's clear once again that the Lord has given us his word to use not just as a part of the public

ministry but also in our homes with our families. As Christian parents and grandparents we are to use the word to pass the faith from one generation to the next.

Here again we have been given the tools to use. But we don't have to use them alone. One of the reasons the Lord has gathered us into a Christian congregation and surrounds us with fellow believers is so that we work together and assist each other in teaching his truths. And so we properly establish programs of Christian education in our congregation not to replace parents but partner with parents and to assist parents as they seek to pass on the wonderful truths of the Gospel to their children.

So far we've taken a pretty self-centered look at the divine tools that Jesus has lovingly given to us. We've been talking about using them for our own families. But Jesus told us these are the tools we are to use to make disciples of all nations. It's clear he wants us to share his Gospel with the world.

Often with good reason, the words of this text are used to encourage mission work. They are described as a command which reminds us that the Lord wants his church to grow and expand that he wants more and more souls to come to faith in Jesus. Surely, it's appropriate that we use these words to remind us to share the faith with others as well as to support the work of those who can carry the Gospel to places and peoples that are beyond our personal reach.

But sometimes we forget that these words also describe the way the family of believers will grow spiritually. We will grow as we are taught to follow everything that the Lord has taught. And so personal Bible study is important for each of us. Jesus stresses that we are to teach and pass on all of his teachings. But Jesus also expects that those teachings will bear fruits of faith. (Luke 11:28) He said, "Blessed ... are those who hear the word of God and obey it."

We will grow in grace through the word that will empower us to work for the Lord with the tools he has entrusted to us. With proper instruction in the word, the Lord will remove our fears and encourage our timid natures so that we are willing and able to spread the message of Jesus' love.

Today we've gone on a little retreat with Jesus. We've reflected on his authority and we've pondered his love. And as often happens on retreats, Jesus has encouraged and refreshed us. He's inspired us to be about the task which he has given us. So now Let's go!

Amen.