

Matthew 28:16-20

When Jesus gathered his class of 11 students at their mountain rendezvous, the meeting had all the trappings of a graduation ceremony. Even the ever popular commencement address was included, complete with (as always) gems of wisdom, pearls of hope and words of challenge. One phase of their life together was ending, and another was about to begin.

This group of 11 students had come a long way since their education began during those first days near the Sea of Galilee. They had listened to the Master Teacher, and learned their lessons well enough to earn passing grades. They had come through harsh tests together, endured hardships and scoldings, witnessed miracles and shared meals with otherwise undesirable people. Through their three years of education, their lives had been changed, for the better in most cases. Now, they were facing one of those significant transition points in life: graduation.

They are being sent out into the world under Jesus direction. Maybe some of them are excited. Maybe some of them are scared. What will the future hold for them? What will this new season in their lives demand of them? They may have been nervous.

It is written in verse 17, "When they saw Jesus, they worshiped him; but some doubted." I have to admit that I find it a little troubling that some of the 11 disciples, who Jesus is commissioning to go out and tell the world all about God's love made known in Jesus. To go out and start the church. Some of these disciples doubted Jesus.

They had seen him feed thousands of people. They had seen him heal people. They had seen him raise people from the dead. They have even seen Jesus himself alive again after dying on

the cross. They worshiped him, but some doubted. And it makes me wonder, “If those first disciples who saw Jesus in the flesh doubted what chance do we, who haven’t seen Jesus in the flesh, have?”

It says they worshiped him, but some doubted. All 11 worshiped Jesus, but some doubted. I wonder what their doubts were like. Did the doubts inside their head sound something like, “ I am afraid. I don’t know if can go out and issue the invitation without Jesus by my side. I am afraid. What if they come and crucify me just like they did Jesus. I am not that good with people. I am afraid that I might not have what it takes to go out into the world and talk with people about God.”

We have all probably had similar doubts in our life. “ I could never be a small group leader because I don’t know enough about the Bible. I could never teach Sunday School because I don’t know enough about the Bible. I could never talk to somebody about Jesus forgiveness because I would get the t words wrong.”

Jesus meets these doubts of the disciples and ours with an assurance, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.” Here is a piece of Good News! The disciples aren’t doing things under their own authority, but under the authority of Jesus the Son of God.

And then Jesus commands them, “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 and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.”

These are Jesus parting instructions to his disciples. Baptize and teach. These two things go hand in hand. Very often in the Lutheran Church we have baptized people first and then teach them about Jesus in Sunday School, confirmation instruction, worship and hopefully in their homes as they grown up. Some traditions and some people do the learning first, the study of Jesus words and life first and then they are baptized. We aren't given instructions about how to do it, but left to our own devices to rely on the Holy Spirit and the authority of Jesus.

Jesus words wring in my ears, "Teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you." Really, Jesus everything? Let's face it some of Jesus teachings are easier to swallow than others. Some of them provide comfort such as , " Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of God. Blessed are those who mourn for they will be comforted. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteous ness, for they will be filled. Come to me all who are weary and I will give them rest." And we say yes, Lord Jesus. We want to learn all of your commands and teachings!

But then we hear some of Jesus words such as, "Do not judge, so that you may not be judged. Those who find their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it. No one can serve two masters; for a slave with either hate the one and love the other or be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth." And we might think to ourselves really? All of Jesus commands? We have to learn them all?

My cousin TJ , when he was very young, I think around four or five, was very curious about the origin of things. He constantly pestered his parents in a dialogue somewhat like this: "Mommy, who made this stove?"

People made the stove.

“Who made the people?”

God made the people.

“Daddy, who made the TV?”

People made that TV.

“Who made the people?”

God made the people.

And so it went on like that for weeks. Finally, when the family was on an outing which took them close to an airport, TJ exclaimed, “Oh, Mommy, see the airplane! I can see the windows and doors, and wheels and wings! Who made those?”

For the millionth time his Mom replied, “People made those things.” There was a short silence, and then TJ questioned, “And I suppose God made those people?”

“That’s right said his mother. Another short silence and then in an exasperated voice TJ said,

“Just who is this God anyway?”

Just who is this God anyway? That is a question that the disciples were no doubt asked often by people.

Who is this God anyway? God is the creator of the world. God is our Father. God is Jesus Christ who died on a cross and on the third day rose again. God is the Holy Spirit, which blows faith into our lives.

John Wesley once wrote, "Bring me a worm that can comprehend a human being, and then I will show you a human being that can comprehend the Trinity." I hope that God's mystery won't stop you from asking that question that probably sprang from your lips when you were a child, "Who is this God anyway?"

I hope some of Jesus' commands that are more challenging won't stop you from learning what he taught his disciples and has been passed onto us. This summer we will be studying Matthew every Sunday morning. If you are unable to join us please listen to the podcast online. Studying Jesus' words is part of how we live out our Baptism. Our identity as children of God. The other part is sharing that Good News with other people. Jesus' final parting words were, "Remember I am with you always, even to the very end of the age."

So remember in whatever conversations you have this summer with neighbors in the backyard, or around the campfire, or at the soccer game. Jesus is there with you. Be assured of his presence.