



Trinity Sunday, June 7, 2020

The Great One-in-Three

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Psalm 8; Matthew 28:16-20

Here is a mountaintop moment in the lives of the disciples. Few of us live on the mountains — even here in western Pennsylvania, where there are plenty of them to choose from. Some weeks, it feels as if we are living in the trenches. But we savor mountaintop moments; they stand out from the rest. They are formative. They define who we are. They shape our future. They grant us confidence for today.

The disciples went to Galilee, and to the mountain, because Jesus had directed them. Directions are important in life. On a journey, or on the journey of life, it all depends on who is giving the directions. When it is Christ, the second person of the Trinity, the directions are from God.

This past week has been a time for many to ponder the question, "I wish God would tell me what to do." The killing of George Floyd is a national tragedy and a societal disgrace. What happened to George Floyd has re-opened a painful wound in our country that has never healed. We are heavy in heart. We know that our society is in need of healing change, a bridging of the divides that separate, the establishment of trust. We may be able to find direction in our Scripture today: this particular passage from Matthew, in which we find almighty and divine direction for the disciples' lives and direction for our own. If you have been thinking about what God wants you to do, then this passage is for you. It invites you to engage your life with God's purpose. It says that Jesus directed them, and, because He directed them, they went.

I recall asking my stepdad about his service in the South Pacific during World War II. He served in the Navy. It was a challenging time. He had enlisted. When I asked him about why he went, he said, "Because my President asked me." He put tremendous value on FDR as our nation's leader — even as Christians put great value in Christ, our leader.

"I did this because Jesus asked me," is a clear description of the *why* and the *what* of our life of faith. The authority of Jesus is first and foremost. Let Jesus direct you. Then, do as He directs.

Did you notice that the eleven worshiped Him — but some doubted? We would like to know which ones were among the doubters. But Matthew does not say. That is good. It allows room for us to doubt and wonder, to reflect and ponder — all of them important to the growth of our faith.

Any shared enterprise has those who are on the forefront — those who are convinced of what is happening and what needs to be done, before others are even aware. And then there are those who need a bit more convincing: the honest doubters — the ones who are not there just yet. One of those eleven on the mountain was Thomas, famous for having been among the honest doubters. The Risen Christ convinced Thomas of the truth of the Resurrection, and the imperative of spreading the good news. Church tradition has it that, after that experience, Thomas went from doubt to laboring far afield — all the way to India — to proclaim Christ as Lord.

That is how it is. Honest doubters, who see and believe, are often the most engaged of all who work for a particular cause. Do not become discouraged if you are an honest doubter. Let there be room for the Holy Spirit to be at work within you.

Evelyn Underhill, whose book *Mysticism* is a Christian classic, says: "On every level of life, from housework to heights of prayer, in all judgment and efforts to get things done, hurry and impatience are sure marks of the amateur."

To those who are not doubters, please learn: you can help others catch up with you — to help them see Christ, to know His truth, to let it rule their lives.

If you had been among the eleven there on that mountain that day, you would have received your assignment for life. Your reason for being: *“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 that I have commanded you.”*

“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations,” is about as inclusive as you can get. There is not one nation left out. Nowhere will you find Jesus saying: *“Go therefore and make disciples of some, but not of others.”* The message of the Gospel is to include, not exclude. The message of the Gospel bridges boundaries. In a world that seems to thrive on choosing sides, and pitting one group against another, and acting out of prejudice and fear, those eleven disciples and those they managed to reach were to be different. They knew that we cannot judge the human heart; only God can do that. And the history of the faithful is all about divisions coming down; and people ministering together; and upbuilding one another; and serving not the forces of intolerance, but the one eternal God, who is love, and kindness, and grace.

You may know about Latasha Morrison, and you may have read her book, *Be the Bridge*. I hope that you have, or that you will. Here is something she says in that book and lives in her life. It is entirely in keeping with what those first eleven disciples set out to do:

“In the love of the family of God, we must become color brave, color caring, color honoring — and not color blind. We have to recognize the image of God in one another. We have to love, despite — and even because of — our differences.”

The word *“disciple”* occurs 269 times in the New Testament. It is that important. A disciple:

- follows Jesus. (*“Come and follow me ...”*)
- is changed by Jesus. (*“I will make you ... ”*)
- shares the mission of Jesus. (*“... fishers of people.”*)

If we consider ourselves as the faith descendants of the first eleven disciples, then what does this commission say to us? The threefold goal is this:

- To make disciples — who can continue to make disciples.
- To baptize them in the name of the **Great One-in-Three**, the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit.
- To teach them to obey everything that Christ has commanded us.

When a Christian is faithful, she or he will ask: *“How am I accomplishing the commission of my Lord?”* When a church is faithful, it will ask, *“How are we doing the things Christ commissioned us to do?”*

It is like this:

A middle-aged man turned to some people he trusted, so that they would make a home for him — the first home he had ever owned in his life. They did it. As they began, they asked him if there were any colors he did not like. He answered that he was color blind, but he did not like the color orange. The funny thing is, he was wearing a shirt that was blue and orange plaid. He just didn't see it.

They went on and created a great first-ever home for him. And when the big reveal came, he toured it with them, and marveled at how perfectly suited to him it was. When they had toured the house, they went out on the back porch, and then the couple gave him a gift: a pair of glasses that address being color blind.

And then, he went inside and was filled with astonishment and amazement, because he was seeing it again, as if for the first time. He was no longer color blind. He was color brave, color caring, color honoring — and not color blind.

We can grow into being color brave. We can grow into being color caring. We can grow into being color honoring. Not color blind.

Christ has a work for you to do. You can know that, as you share the faith, you will become more brave, and caring, and honoring of all people. Hear Jesus saying, *“And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”* As we go into the world, we are not alone. God is at work. God is saving and restoring. God is sustaining and renewing. Whoever we are, God is with us in Jesus, through the Holy Spirit to the end of the age. Amen.