

*Matthew 28:16-20, 2014, Trinity Sunday*

Vince Lombardi was famous for starting every Green Bay Packer season by holding up a football and saying, "Gentlemen, this is a football."

The point was to get back to the very basics of the game to provide a sure foundation for everything that would follow.

Jesus' conversation with the disciples was his "this is a football speech."

Jesus holds up the Father, and the Son and the Holy Spirit as the sure foundation for everything that follows.

It is the beginning of a new time in the lives of the 11 disciples who have met Jesus on a mountain in Gentile territory, Galilee, and they are given their final instructions, their final calling.

You know they have learned a great deal in the previous years, they have had some practice, and now it is time for a new season.

These 11 are going to be the team who goes out into the field to carry on Jesus' work.

And what is that work?

Jesus says their work is to make disciples,  
to make followers, people who believe that He is the Lord and who will commit themselves and their lives to Him.

And how is that accomplished?

They baptize, they teach and they remember.

There is a part of this that is so obvious that it is overlooked and that is that Jesus is talking to men who are His disciples already.

Now we know that, but we don't think about what a difference that makes.

The point is, how would one make a disciple if they were not a disciple already themselves?

This may seem like a ridiculous thing to point out but, in order to make a disciple you have to be a disciple.

They already had to be and were living the life, and they had to continue that, it is no different today.

If you want to make a disciple you have to be living the life, you have to be committed, you have to be living a life that reveals the presence of Jesus.

You know, there are many in the church who would say, "that is the pastor's job, not mine."

But, first off that is not the case and I know that some of you are about the business of making disciples. Some of our guests, visitors and new members come here because you are disciples and are active in that.

You go out there and you talk about God, and you talk about faith community, and when you do you talk about this faith community.

In his letter to the Ephesians Paul writes:

*The gifts Christ gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until all of us come to the*

*unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ."*

To equip the saints for the work of ministry.

You are the saints, All Saints.

In this passage Jesus sends you to be a part of making disciples along with these 11, and He widens the gateway to include all the nations, not just Israel in his day and in our day,

- not just the rich and affluent, not just the educated, not just the healthy,
- not just Americans or those who share our ethnic background, not just those who are the same as us,
  - but everyone, all the nations.

Jesus did not send these disciples out ill equipped and unprepared.

We know the stories of the three years He spent with these disciples.

We know the story of when Jesus had sent them out before with authority to cast out demons, heal the sick and proclaim the good news that the Kingdom of Heaven had come.

You may notice that there is one ministry that they were not called to do the first time he sent them out which they were when Jesus sends them this last time; teaching.

That ministry he must have retained for himself while his disciples were in training.

But again, Jesus sends them out by His authority over heaven and earth,

and it is in and through their relationship with Jesus that they are able to access the power of God to cast out evil wherever they find it,  
to heal the sick, to teach the new disciples to obey all that Jesus has commanded,  
and proclaim the Good News that the Kingdom of Heaven has come to the world in the flesh and blood of Jesus Christ

This authority and power is not a coercive violent power demonstrated by the use of force to conform people to God's will.

You have choices in this.

This authority and power is demonstrated in self giving.

It was that coercive power that Jesus was subjected to and that took his life.

While He could have destroyed that power and saved His life by preserving His identity, by not confessing that he was the King come from heaven, He instead allowed that evil power to make good on its threat  
knowing that His life rests not in His own power to preserve it,  
but in the Father's willingness to sustain it.

In the actions of Jesus' death and God's resurrecting Him from the dead the impotence of Satan's power was exposed

In that then, the disciples, and you, are freed from fear that causes you to hold on anxiously to your own life and possessions,

and are freed to love others by sharing all that sustains you in going to make disciples of and for Jesus.

This is life lived in relationship with the Triune God in whom we believe as the creator, the redeemer and the sustainer of the world and our life.

This is the authority, the power and the work of the Holy Trinity in and through you, the saints equipped for ministry, for baptizing and teaching.

This is the sure foundation for everything that would follow.

What follows is the ministry you are called to.

Lombardi's football players will begin their season with practice, they will continue to learn more about the game, more about their own strengths and capabilities,

and they will hone their skills so they improve in the game throughout the entire season so they can be the best they can be, play the best they can.

They never quit learning and yet, they will always be in the game.

You are always in the game..

God will lead you into new situations that will push you to your limits, give you new experiences, identify your strengths and of course help you deal with your fears and hone your skills.

Ministry can be scary, it can be hard work, it can be painful, and you will always be a student. That is part of what disciples are.

In the process you will learn about God, about yourself; your capabilities, strengths, and fears and how to use all that God has given you to be the best disciple you can be.

At the same time you are called to be the apostle, or the prophet, or the evangelist, or perhaps a pastor or a teacher, in the game, at work in ministry.

You have this awesome God who has created you in His image, who has redeemed you through the sacrifice of His Son Jesus, and who has sent His Spirit to live in you, to call you and gather you here as disciples, and make you holy,

to equip All you Saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until all of us come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ.”

There are a lot of things we don't understand about the Trinity, but what I have described is your triune God at work in you and through you.

Living the life God calls you to is a challenge, it is difficult and a different life,

But remember, Jesus is with you always, to the end of the age as you go and make disciples in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen

