

Lectionary A June 11, 2017 2nd Sunday after Pentecost
Grace and Peace Lutheran Church, Evansville, Indiana
Pastor Roberta Meyer
Genesis 1:1-2:4a
Psalm 8
2 Corinthians 13:11-13
Matthew 28:16-20

The Great Promise

Matthew 28:16-20

16 Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. 17 When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. 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 and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

When I was teaching kindergarten I started every morning with the day's promises. I was really listing the day's agenda to the class but in the form of promises.

I promise we will read about something smelly

We will make a friend.

Math will make us hungry.

Our snack will smile at us.

This was fun for the children. The promises were sort of mysteries, that they tried to figure out as the day went on. But most of all they learned that if something was promised, it always happened. They learned that I meant what I promised. If something happened unexpected, I would always explain to them that the promises would happen the next day if we couldn't get them in as planned. I didn't break the promises I made to the children. They learned to count on my promises. As time went on during the school year these promises created a trusting relationship between my students and me.

On this Sunday when we celebrate the mystery of the Trinity, God the Creator, as we just read in Genesis, God the Redeemer, who is Jesus, and God the Holy Spirit, our advocate, our counselor, our companion, on this day we are given promises. First of all, we promised the graduates that we are honoring them today, and cake and punch is coming! We look at the bulletin and we see more promises. Warren Hale is here and we are promised a "Warren Style" music experience. We were also promised a different kind of scripture reading. And if you could see the title of this sermon, you would see that I am promising to talk about Jesus' Great Promise.

The words we read from our Gospel today are the very last words Matthew wrote. Jesus is leaving the disciples and is ready to ascend to heaven. Jesus leaves them with these familiar

words that we call the Great Commission. “Go. Make disciples. Baptize them in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and teach them everything I taught you.” Then here it comes. Jesus’ great promise to all of us. “*And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.*”

Sometimes I think we don’t get exactly what Jesus is saying in this promise, “*I am with you always.*” Did you notice Jesus’ language? He isn’t saying something that is only happening in the future. Christ *is* with us. Right now. In this place. Everywhere we go Jesus is beside us in our struggles at home or at work or at our congregation or in the world. Jesus is with us. Encouraging us, comforting us, working with us, guiding us, granting us the grace and courage necessary to be the people of God in the world right now.

We may know Jesus is available for us and will hear us when we call, like in an emergency, a time of tragedy or loss, when we call on God for extra help. “*But calling on God and experiencing God’s presence with us all the time is not the same.*” (Lose, 2017) What about all the times in our everyday lives—when things are going pretty good and when we have those days that we feel like we got up on the wrong side of the bed? What about those joyous times, and sad times, those hopeful times, and those times when we are nervous about something—do we sense God’s presence?

This morning as I stand up here delivering this sermon I’m thinking about a friend who recently had a stroke, my niece who got married last week and is coming home from her honeymoon to start a new life in a new state. My mind is on my aging father, and my brother who is facing heart surgery. I am thinking about my neighbor who is having surgery on Wednesday and my grandson who just got his driving permit. Are all these people aware that God is with them right now? Some probably do, but possibly not all of them do.

And what about us, here right now. Do we sense God’s presence with us, now? It is really significant that the very last thing Matthew records of everything Jesus said and did is a promise: “*And I am with you always, to the end of the age.*” Right here, right now, and forever. We can count on Jesus’ promises.

Counting on this promise that God is always with us every day, can help us understand the Trinity. Oh, not all the theological stuff about the logistics of this doctrine but rather for us to see what the Trinity does for us.

I read a story from a pastor who said one Sunday after church one of his parishioners told about a conversation they had at dinner. They were discussing the sermon. That made this pastor feel pleased. Well, the young child of the family chimed in with her opinion. “Pastor’s sermons are all the same. They are all “blah, blah, blah...love.” (Leimer, 2017)

This child got the jest of the Trinity. “Blah, Blah, Blah...Love.” All the time. In our lives from the very beginning of creation God saw that it was very good. God so loved the world. When Jesus came in human flesh and bones, God so loved the world. And now, in the messiness of our lives, and the turmoil of our world God’s Spirit is with us. God Loves us. The Trinity is all about God’s love for us.

One time when my son was just a little guy, about six or seven, out of the clear blue, he said to me, “Mom, sometimes it feels like Jesus is rubbing against me.” Talk about being aware of God

presence. That took my breath away and my prayer for him has always been since then that he would always feel Jesus rubbing against him.

How would this affect our lives? Feeling Jesus rubbing against us no matter what we do? Think about it. It's Jesus' promise to be "rubbing against us all the time" that makes it possible for us to follow Jesus' Great Commission. It gives us the strength and power to go, baptize, teach—to love. Through us, as Jesus' commissioned disciples, this promise pours out on everyone, seeping love into the places where it is not felt and it rubs against them. This great promise binds us to Jesus and to all God's children. It creates relationships and possibilities. That is what the Trinity is about. And that's all we need to understand about the Trinity. Out of the mouth of little children, "Blah, blah, blah...LOVE, LOVE, LOVE. Amen.