

## **The Church's Partnership With The Triune God.**

Text: Matt 28:16-20

1) The Great Commission

Suggested Hymns:

2) Encouragement For The Task

139, 140, 221, 279, 515

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is Matthew 28:16–20, <sup>16</sup> *Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, to the mountain which Jesus had appointed for them.* <sup>17</sup> *When they saw Him, they worshiped Him; but some doubted.* <sup>18</sup> *And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.*

<sup>19</sup> *Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,* <sup>20</sup> *teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the world.”* (NKJV)

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

The salvation of sinful mankind is the will and work of the Triune God. It is God — the Triune God — who *“who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.”*<sup>1</sup> It is God — the Triune God — who *“is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.”*<sup>2</sup>

God the Father, out of His great love for the world, *“gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.”*<sup>3</sup>

God the Son, out of His love for sinners, *“made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men.* <sup>8</sup> *And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.”*<sup>4</sup>

God the Holy Spirit, out of the same love, makes the blessings of salvation our very own by bringing us to faith in Christ, and through such faith restores us to fellowship with God.

You see, when God first created man, He intended for him to enjoy a blessed communion and a perfect fellowship with his Creator. But man, through sin, severed this relationship. God, however, did not want to lose man. He wanted man to return to Him as His child. And God provided the way. Man could never have found his way back to God. Man the sinner could never have restored the broken fellowship.

But ***“God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them.”***<sup>5</sup> Through the redemptive work of Christ the barrier of sin has been removed, the fellowship has been restored, atonement has been made, man is declared at one with God.

The salvation of sinners is an accomplished fact. When dying on the cross, Jesus declared His mission completed when He said, ***“It is finished!”*** His saving work was done. But while the salvation of the world has been accomplished, the good news of that salvation is to be proclaimed to sinners everywhere, for it is through this good news, the Gospel, that the Holy Spirit brings people to faith in Christ and thus makes them partakers of His salvation.

God, in Christ, has reconciled the world to Himself. The only task remaining is to proclaim to lost mankind the Word of reconciliation and to voice the appeal, ***“Be reconciled to God.”***<sup>6</sup> This is the task that God has given to His church on earth, to all Christians, to you and me.

Now here is a wondrous thing: God could have commissioned His angels to proclaim the Gospel of salvation to this sinful world. But He did not. He gave that task to His church, to His redeemed people. It was to His disciples that Jesus said, ***“You shall be witnesses to Me ... to the end of the earth.”***<sup>7</sup> ***“Go into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature.”***<sup>8</sup>

What a glorious privilege! We have been called, as it were, into partnership with God! It is our privilege to share with God the task of saving the world. God has indeed done the saving; but ours is the responsibility to proclaim to the world this saving truth.

May the Holy Spirit bless our meditation this Trinity Sunday as we consider *The Church's Partnership with the Triune God*. May the Lord bless our meditation.

### 1. The Great Commission

The obligations resting upon us, as partners with the Triune God, are expressed in the words of the Great Commission: *"<sup>19</sup> Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, <sup>20</sup> teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you."*

These words were spoken by Jesus to His disciples sometime after He had risen from the dead and shortly before He ascended into heaven. The place was a mountaintop in Galilee.

#### A Mountaintop Experience

It is interesting to note that many of the significant events in the ministry of Jesus occurred on mountaintops. One of His temptations took place on the top of a mountain. It was from a mountain that He preached His magnificent Sermon on the Mount. His transfiguration before Peter, James, and John occurred on a mountaintop. He was crucified on "*Calvary's mournful mountain.*"<sup>9</sup> It was from the mount of Olives that He ascended into heaven.

So here also, the event recorded in our text took place on a mountain. It was an important occasion. It was to be a most significant meeting.

#### A Divine Appointment

The meeting was no accident; it had been prearranged by divine appointment. The disciples and other followers of Jesus — perhaps as many as five hundred of them — assemble on a Galilean hillside. Suddenly Jesus appears; and when they see His glorious countenance, they prostrate themselves before Him in worship and adoration. The risen Lord steps into their midst, reassuringly, and He says, *"All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. <sup>19</sup> Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, <sup>20</sup> teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you."*

#### The Church's Mission

In the words of this great commission Jesus spells out the church's mission. The task of the Christian church till the end of time is to go and make disciples of all nations. The church is not to stand still and wait for people to come to it, but it is to go into all the world, and having gone, it is to make disciples of people.

Like a mighty army the church is to move, to advance, to invade. Our mission map has no boundaries; our divine Captain has set no limits on the conquests we are to make.

What diversity exists among the families of the earth! There are differences in race, colour, nationality, language, culture, achievement; yet all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.<sup>10</sup> All people are thus separated from God, in need of a Saviour; all have been redeemed by the same Saviour; all are to be made His disciples.

Jesus, in our text, tells us how this discipling is to be done: by baptising and teaching.

### Baptise!

Jesus has commissioned His church to baptise. This sacrament is administered in our midst, but how much do we really know about it? Luther tells us that *“Baptism is not water only, but it is water used together with God’s word and by His command.”* Baptism is not merely a symbolic washing as some would have it. It is a means of grace, a means of making disciples of people. It is a means of imparting the blessings of God’s grace to sinners. *“It works forgiveness of sins, delivers from death and the devil, and gives eternal salvation to all who believe this, as the words and promises of God declare.”<sup>11</sup>*

### Infant Baptism

We are to make disciples of all nations baptising them. And so we baptise men and women, adults, youth, and infants. Jesus nowhere tells us that we must wait until a person reaches a certain age before we can baptise him. He wants us to make disciples of all nations; He wants the little children to be His disciples too.

***“Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of God.”<sup>12</sup>*** Little children are not disciples of Jesus by nature. They are born in sin, under the wrath of God, separated from God; they, too,

must be born again if they are to enter the kingdom of God. We can never sufficiently thank God that He has given us this wonderful means of grace whereby even our little infants can become disciples of Christ, children of God and heirs of heaven.

### The Formula of Baptism

We are to baptise in the name of the Triune God: “... *in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.*” These words are not a mere pious recital. They are the word of God which makes the water of Baptism “*a life-giving water which by grace gives the new birth through the Holy Spirit.*” These words constitute the power of Baptism, and they convey the blessings of Baptism.

Through Baptism God the Father becomes our Father; He adopts us as His children. Through Baptism God the Son becomes our Redeemer and Brother; we become members of His body; we put on Christ; His righteousness becomes our glorious dress. Through Baptism God the Holy Spirit becomes our Comforter, and we become His temple in which He comes to dwell.

Thus, through Baptism, we enter into an intimate communion with God; we are received into fellowship with Him. He becomes our God and we become His people, the sheep of His pasture.

### Teach!

Jesus, further, has entrusted to His church the task of teaching all nations: “*teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you.*” In the case of infants: we first baptise, then we teach. In the case of unbaptised adults: we first teach and then we baptise. We are to do both — baptise and teach — and through such means of grace we are to make disciples of all nations.

### The Content of Our Teaching

What is it that we are to teach? Sad to say, many churches nowadays have lost sight of their teaching mission. They keep their people informed of the latest developments in current events, science, politics; they discuss with them the latest fads in philosophy, and the problems and methods of psychology. But this is not the teaching task of the church.

Rather, we are to teach people to observe all things that Christ has commanded us. We are to portray sin in all its heinousness; we are to declare the grace of God in all its sweetness. We are to preach Law and Gospel: the Law, to crush men's stony hearts; the Gospel, to pick up the pieces, to create new hearts in them. We are to teach the Word of God in its truth and purity, clearly proclaiming each and every doctrine as it is set forth in the inspired Scripture.

*“<sup>20</sup> Teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you,”* Jesus says. We have no business selecting a doctrine here and a precept there and forgetting the rest. We have no right to omit from our teaching a doctrine of the Bible which doesn't happen to agree with us, or which doesn't appeal to our reason.

We are to teach all that Christ has commanded so that people may be led to observe all that He has commanded. Jesus says, *“If you continue in My word, you are My disciples indeed. <sup>32</sup> And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.”*<sup>13</sup>

### The Purpose of Our Teaching

The purpose of our teaching is: to lead people to observe all that Jesus has commanded so that they may be His disciples indeed; to lead them to repentance and faith; to bring people to Christ, to keep them with Christ, and to help them grow in Christ. It is to make them wise for salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus.<sup>14</sup>

It is to make people true children of God who are thoroughly equipped for every good work.<sup>15</sup> It is to give them the knowledge of God, the only true God, and of Jesus Christ, whom He has sent.<sup>16</sup> This is eternal life. And this is the ultimate goal we are striving for in the teaching mission of the church.

## 2. Encouragement For The Task

A tremendous challenge confronts the church. Jesus has commissioned us to make disciples of all nations. This is an urgent, formidable task.

### The Urgency of Our Task

In many ways the world of today is growing smaller. Thanks to modern methods of communication and transportation, the far reaches of the earth have become almost as accessible as the house down the street.

In another sense, however, our world of today is growing larger. The Great Commission concerns itself with people, and the world's population is expanding.

While the Christian church is growing, it is growing relatively smaller. The Christians of the world have always been a minority group, but they are becoming more of a minority all the time. The growth of the heathen population is outstripping that of the Christian population.

At the same time we must remember that no one in this world is born a Christian; everyone is born a heathen, and remains a heathen until he is made a disciple of Christ. To put it another way: Christians are reborn, not born; and the birth rate is far exceeding the rebirth rate.

#### Divine Backing

In view of all this we recognise the urgency of our task. It would be an impossible task if it was left up to us. But it is not left up to us, nor does the successful accomplishment of the task depend upon us. We have behind us the power and authority of Jesus, the almighty Son of God. When commissioning His church, Jesus said, "***All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. <sup>19</sup> Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations.***"

Jesus, the Lord of the church, the One who has commissioned us to disciple the nations, is the Possessor of all power and authority in heaven and earth. As true God He has had this power from all eternity; as true Man He received this power; this power has been given to Him.

Just think of it: our Lord Jesus Christ has complete authority over heaven — over all the angels and archangels and all the saints in glory, over all principalities and powers and dominions and thrones. This authority extends over all the hosts of hell, for He has subdued them under His feet. This authority embraces all the earth — all the forces of nature, all living things, all nations under the sun, all human governments, all the rulers of men, all the armies and navies of the world, all atomic power.

This same Jesus, the Ruler of heaven and earth, the King of creation, the Lord of the nations, has commissioned us to go and make disciples of all nations.

The success of our mission does not depend upon us. All Jesus asks of us is that we hold forth the Word of life to a dying world. It is still God who gives the

increase. Our credentials will not always be received; our message will often fall on deaf ears. Nevertheless God has promised that His Word shall not return to Him void, but it shall prosper in the thing for which He has sent it.<sup>17</sup>

Today after the Service David from the Bible Society will speak to us about the valuable work they are doing to spread the Word of God.

#### A Divine Companion

Our Lord offers us still another word of encouragement. As we go about our task, carrying out the Great Commission, we are not alone. Jesus has left with us the promise, “*Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the world.*”

To do the work of the Lord is often a lonely task. It is not easy for a missionary to leave home and country to go into a strange, far distant land. But he does not go alone. Jesus is with him.

It is not an easy matter to walk up to a stranger and speak of Christ. But again, we are not alone. The Lord is by our side.

To do the work of the Lord is often a dangerous task. “*Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves.*”<sup>18</sup> But we are not alone. The Shepherd is with us to sustain us with the rod of His power and the staff of His authority. Jesus is with us to comfort us with His abiding love.

The work of the Lord is often discouraging. And in that work we often become aware of our many weaknesses. But the Lord is always present at our side. His grace is sufficient for us; for His strength is made perfect in our weakness.<sup>19</sup>

On this Trinity Sunday let us lift up grateful hearts to God, praising Him for having called us into fellowship with Him, thanking Him for the privilege of being His partners; and let us pray that He will fill our hearts with zeal to do the work He has given us to do while it is day, before the night comes when no man can work. Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep our hearts and minds, in Christ Jesus. Amen.

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<sup>1</sup> 1 Tim. 2:4

<sup>2</sup> 2 Peter 3:9

<sup>3</sup> John 3:16

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- <sup>4</sup> Phil. 2:7-8  
<sup>5</sup> 2 Cor. 5:19  
<sup>6</sup> 2 Cor. 5:20  
<sup>7</sup> Acts 1:8  
<sup>8</sup> Mark 16:15  
<sup>9</sup> Hymn 73 v3  
<sup>10</sup> Rom. 3:23  
<sup>11</sup> *Luther's Small Catechism*, The Blessings of Baptism  
<sup>12</sup> Mark 10:14  
<sup>13</sup> John 8:31-32  
<sup>14</sup> 2 Tim. 3:15  
<sup>15</sup> 2 Tim. 3:17  
<sup>16</sup> John 17:3  
<sup>17</sup> Isaiah 55:11  
<sup>18</sup> Matt. 10:16  
<sup>19</sup> 2 Cor. 12:9