

Matthew 28.16-20
May 31, 2026, Holy Trinity Sunday

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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 they 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."

also, Genesis 1:1–2:4a

The ending of Matthew's Gospel
 brings the disciples (and us)
 back to the beginning.

Galilee is where it all began,
 where Jesus made his home
 and began teaching.
 It's where he first called for everyone
 to change the way they think
 about God and the world,
 and he said that the kingdom of heaven
 has come near.

Beside the Sea of Galilee,
 he called his first disciples —
 his students.
 In the region of Galilee,
 he taught about
 God's new world of
 heaven-come-near,
 and he brought healing to people.

Of course,
 people found out about him,
 and they came in *droves* to see him.

Now if you were to stand in Capernaum,
 his newly adopted home town,
 and look in every direction,
 you would see all the places
 the people streamed from.

Great crowds came from Syria,
 the Decapolis,

Jerusalem,
 Judea,
 and from beyond the Jordan.
 That's North, East, South, and West —
 every direction!
 Jewish *and* Gentile regions.
 They came,
 regardless of country,
 or language,
 or religion,
 or socio-economic circumstance.

When Jesus saw these crowds,
 he went up a mountain
 and taught his new students.
 In his famous lesson of the beatitudes,
 he described
 God's new world of heaven-come-near.
 We call it the Sermon on the Mount,
 but it's actually Jesus' first class lecture.

In the crowds he saw people
 that the world considers cursed,
 of no account,
 disrespected.
 People who were persecuted
 and even reviled.
 And he called all of them *blessed!*
 Jesus opened his students' eyes
 to a whole new way of seeing
 a world of heaven-come-near.
 He told them
 that they're the salt of the earth,
 enhancing the world's goodness,
 that they're the light of the world
 and will reveal, to everyone around them,
 the goodness of God's new world.

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Now,
 at the close of the gospel narrative,
 after everything they've been through together —
 the *risen* Christ, brings them all back

to Galilee, the very beginning,
and he tells them to go out from there.

Expand the classroom!

Consider every person,
regardless of country,
or language,
or religion,
or socio-economic circumstance,
as students of God's new world
of blessing and love.

Teach everyone you encounter
about this God who is
pure relationship,
pure mutual love,
and that this God wants
to be in relationship
with every person.

This is a whole new understanding of God.

The Greek and Roman religions
considered Christians pagans
because they didn't pray
to all the deities.

Christians were blamed
during times of, say, drought
because they didn't pray to the rain god.

Monotheistic religions
considered Christians heretics and pagans
because they worshiped three,
seemingly, separate gods.

And all of that is quite ironic.

Because those early Christians *did* pray
to the God of rain —
in fact the God who created the water
and the clouds that hold the water
that falls from the sky.

And yes, our understanding of God
is three persons (parent, child, and spirit),
but they are not separate.
They're all one,
inseparable, mutual, reciprocal, equal.
The triune God we worship

is Relationship itself,
 and is Love's origin, source,
 energy, and manifestation in the world.

It's true that the word Trinity
 doesn't appear anywhere in scripture.
 How could it?
 There was no such concept of God at the time.
 Jesus came to teach the world to think,
 apprehend, believe
 a whole *new* concept!

He said the kingdom of heaven has come near,
 and it's Relationship (capital R).
 It's Love (capital L).
 It's kinship,
 with no borders or boundaries.
 And he lived this heaven reality.

*Go into all nations, Jesus said,
 teach this "kingdom of heaven."
 Teach about this God
 who is both parent and child,
 and is even the spirit of Love
 that binds them as one.
 Teach the Relationship that binds
 all of humanity as one —
 one with this triune God
 and one with each other.*

In human culture,
 it's always been thought and taught
 (never more so than now)
 that the cords of relationship
 between nations are
 economic, militaristic,
 and often exploitative.
 The energy and spirit of these cords
 is fear, manipulation, might makes right,
 and padding the coffers of the few
 with money and power.

How do we teach the kinship
 of all people
 in a world like this?

First, we see ourselves as siblings of all people,
 children of the same Creator,
all of us formed in the very
 image of God who is Relationship itself —
 Love's origin itself.

We also see ourselves as parent
 to children whose lives we cherish
 as more dear even than our own.

And we see the Spirit of Love
 in every face —
 even the faces of those with the,
 seemingly, hardest hearts.

Too often, we teach the likeness of Cain —
 the first human to murder his sibling
 out of rivalry,
 and Abel's blood has been
 crying out from the very ground
 of humanity's existence
 ever since.

How do we teach an enemy love?
 We love them.

How do we teach a betrayer faithfulness?
 We maintain our faithfulness to them, in love,
 even to the extent of
 washing their crusty feet.

How do we teach a tyrant compassion?
 We die loving them.

And all of this teaching,
 through the way we live and love,
 happens one relationship at a time.
 Jesus gathered his closest disciples
 one relationship at a time.

This great Commission
 of making disciples of all nations
 is not about making "Christian nations"
 (no matter what Christian Nationalists might say).

In fact, I don't think it's about
 making Christians at all,
 it's about teaching kinship.
 It's about pouring over them

the refreshing new concept
of "Parent, Child, and Loving Spirit."
It's about living the Relationship (capital R).
It's about embodying Love (capital L).
It's about a trinitarian way
of seeing the world as .

And we can be confident about what Jesus said,

I'll be with you.

I'll always be with you.

That's how inseparable we are

from this God who longs

to be in relationship with the whole world.