

<sup>16</sup>Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. <sup>17</sup>When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. <sup>18</sup>Then Jesus came to them and said, **“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.”** <sup>19</sup>**Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,** <sup>20</sup>**and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”**

### THE TRIUNE GOD IS BACKING OUR WORK

*“The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel” (which means “God with us”).*

Our 5-week series worship theme is SAY IT OUT LOUD and today’s instruction: “God is Triune”. And so let’s accomplish our worship goal on the count of three (a fitting number) and say it out loud. One, two, three: “God is triune.”

It feels good to accomplish a goal and so I am thankful our goal is not: WHAT DOES THIS MEAN? God is triune. When we say the first half of the Athanasian Creed later in this service we are only scratching the surface of God is triune. Martin Luther goes a little deeper into the teaching of the Trinity in his catechism, but even if we were to read everything that has ever been written about the doctrine of the Trinity, we would never be able to grasp the meaning of God is triune in all its fullness.

Jesus in these closing words of Matthew’s gospel doesn’t even try to explain the doctrine of God is triune. And yet, as we make our way through the work Jesus gave his disciples to do until Jesus returns, we will see how vitally important the doctrine of the Trinity is for our work, our mission of making disciples of all nations.

On such an occasion of this great commissioning, you might expect one of two events to have happened first. The one event would have been a grand celebration: Robes, hats, tassels, a top-ten ranking of apostles (with 11 apostles that could get awkward), a valedictorian speech. That’s what we do as people, we measure accomplishments, but God doesn’t measure accomplishments at this great commissioning. The other event people might have anticipated is the opposite of the first event: a weeding out of the doubters. In his gospel, Matthew mentions doubters, but Matthew does not identify the doubters nor does Matthew offer an explanation concerning their doubts.

Instead of applying more pressure on these apostles and the believers who would follow the apostles and continue their work, Jesus assures his eleven apostles them and us: THE TRIUNE GOD IS BACKING OUR WORK. And in the rest of our message today we are going to focus our thoughts on three ways the Triune God is backing our work. The triune God is backing our work of making disciples with almighty power, with an achievable plan and with his abiding presence.

#### With Almighty Power

First, the Triune God is backing our work with almighty power. Our text says in verse 18, **“Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.”** Jesus has always had authority. Like the centurion Jesus met in his ministry, Jesus had authority. Jesus changed water into wine. Jesus healed the handicapped, the injured and the sick. Jesus drove out demons and resurrected the dead. Even the weather, the winds and the waves obeyed Jesus. Jesus has always had authority.

However, Jesus for a time, did not make full use of all his authority. If Jesus was truly to take our place under the law, which he did, Jesus could not take advantage of all his authority for his own personal benefit. We can’t turn the stones on our properties into silver for our own benefit, so Jesus can’t turn stone into bread for his own benefit and still be our Savior either. In respect to saving work as our substitute, Jesus does not make full use of his authority. But now that Jesus’ saving work as our substitute is complete, Jesus is no longer bound by laws like we are. And so the same almighty power that created something out of nothing during those six days of creation is the same almighty power creating the light of faith out of the darkness of unbelief.

Sometimes we need to say it out loud: God is triune. We don’t know what that fully means. We only know God in part, but we do know our triune God is fully backing our work with almighty power. One thing I have

learned in all my years: 22 years serving as a pastor, 23 years as a father, 25 as a husband and 49 as a baptized child of God is this: Other people are better than me. Other people rank higher than me. I imagine many of you feel that way too, but what does it matter? All have sinned in their discipleship and fall short of the glory of God. Just as it would be foolish to measure and rank our athletic ability by jumping the Grand Canyon in order to see who could come the closest to other side of the canyon, it just as foolish to compare and rank our discipleship. With almighty power, the Triune God has forgiven our discipleship failures. With his almighty power, God takes our making disciples efforts, however meager or mighty they are, and actually makes more disciples. With almighty power backing our work we can focus our attention on the achievable plan to make disciples.

#### With An Achievable Plan

Jesus continues his teaching, **“<sup>19</sup>Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, <sup>20</sup>and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.”** When God blesses husbands and wives with a child, people congratulate them. And should this new baby become a big brother or a big sister even better. But should that third child come along, there will always be a jokester who will ask the experienced father or mother if they are aware of how these children are made. For now, we'll say: With an achievable plan.

God makes more children with an achievable plan and God makes more disciples with an achievable plan too. We all have different backgrounds and life stories, but we all have been made disciples in the same way. We were made into disciples through the teaching of God's Word and the administration of the sacred act of baptism.

The sacrament of baptism like your birth is a one-time event, but the maturation process of growing-up in your faith through the teaching of God's Word is still taking place. When our Gospel writer Matthew, who was also one of these eleven apostles starts our text, *“Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee...”* the term “disciples” was as deliberately chosen as was the number eleven. These eleven would always be learning and following Jesus even as more disciples would be learning from and following these eleven. None of them were sinless, some of them still had doubts, but say it out loud: God is triune. And the Triune God backs his disciples who don't have it all together so they can make more disciples with an achievable plan. That achievable plan is the gospel in Word and sacrament.

And this achievable plan would become an important issue for discussion in the early New Testament church. One of their ministries was a benevolent ministry: the physical caretaking of older widows. This ministry became so labor intensive the eleven were in danger of neglecting the ministry of the word. Ministries or services of all kinds are a great blessing to God's people: Benevolent ministries, music ministries, fellowship ministries all serve tremendous purposes. God's people should be do something and what God's people should be doing is ministry or serving, something that is beneficial to someone else. And yet the other danger, the Martha danger, is also in play for God's people. Just as parents can so busy their children with so many activities that they aren't really parenting anymore, so disciples can so busy themselves with ministries they are not really making disciples. Say it out loud: God is triune. And the triune God back our ministry with an achievable plan.

#### With his abiding presence

And finally, Jesus is backing our work with his abiding presence. Matthew's Gospel closes in mic drop fashion, **“And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”** Because of the other Gospels we know there was an ascension. Because of the book of Acts we know there wasn't be a forever good-bye, but a promise that “This same Jesus .... will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven (Ac 1:11). And yet Matthew ends his Gospel in the same way he started, with Immanuel (which means God with us. Maybe it was the tax-collector in Matthew. Tax-collecting was a lonely profession. No one except other tax-collectors and sinners hung out with Matthew. And Matthew knew what it meant to have Jesus hang with him and share a meal together. The ministry of the church can feel like a lonely place sometimes. Like the prophet Elijah, at times, we can feel like the only one left. No one believes. No one comes. No one cares. No one does anything. This wasn't true for Elijah and this isn't true for us either, but when it feels like you are all alone, say it out loud: God is triune. The Triune God is backing our work because our God is Immanuel and you know what that means. Amen.