

Trinity Sunday, June 19th, 2011

Trinity in Motion

Genesis 1:1—2:4a; 2 Corinthians 13:11-13;

Matthew 28:16-20

“Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.”

“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations. . . And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

This is the *last thing* that the risen Jesus will say to his disciples in the Gospel of Matthew.

This is also the *first thing* that the risen Jesus will say to his disciples in the Gospel of Matthew.

Eight weeks ago, on Easter morning, we heard that it was only Mary Magdalene and the other Mary who had met

the risen Jesus.

The disciples who go to the mountain this morning have not yet been to Easter.

They haven't been shaken by an earthquake, nor have they heard from an angel.

They haven't seen the risen Jesus or heard his voice.

All they have is the message from the women witnesses, "Go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee."

So, the eleven brothers go, trudging back north to where it all began, all the way from Jerusalem to Galilee, not having a clue whether or not the women's word is true about Jesus being raised from the dead.

But they go.

They go into an unseen future with just the word "Go."

They have no binding contract.

They have no secure job offer.

They don't even have an insurance policy.

They have nothing but a word from these witnesses
and a rumor that they have robbed the tomb of the body.

This is discipleship: Going with only a word.

And when these disciples finally get up the mountain
where they finally see the risen Jesus, we are told that the
response is mixed: "When they saw him, they worshiped
him; but some doubted."

Just like our own experience, worship is mixed with
uncertainty.

But Jesus has already indicated that even the tiniest
amount of faith, even the size of a grain of mustard, we

heard on Easter, is enough for worship.

This is discipleship, too: the mixture of faith and doubt.

We know this is true.

We also have heard the message to “go” where Jesus will meet us.

So, like those two Mary’s with their eleven brothers, we come trudging up those steps to church, maybe with the hope that the promise might actually be true—the promise that Jesus raised from the dead will meet us here as well.

And what is so remarkable is that Jesus’ response to our worship and to our doubt is the same: “Go. . . 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, and *teaching them* to obey everything that I have

commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

You might expect Jesus to insist that those who are not certain about him would get their act together first before they “Go and make disciples.”

But no, Jesus is undeterred by our doubts, speaking to us all in the same way, “Go. . . make disciples.”

So much of the time, we feel so incompetent, so uncertain, so unsure of ourselves when it comes to “going and making disciples,” talking to others about our faith, inviting others to our church, or serving people in Jesus’ name.

It seems we have no problem recommending a fine restaurant, or a good film, or a favorite author, or where to

buy something, but ask us to share our faith or invite someone to worship, and we wilt and wither like pansies without water in the summer sun.

I know we Americans, especially we oldline Protestants, are intensely private about our faith, but I wonder if this is all there is to it.

I'm told that adults are hesitant to learn a language or how to play an instrument, not because our brains are no longer able to learn, but because we fear appearing incapable, incompetent of doing something.

Many of us feel we are simply incapable of Jesus' Great Commission to "Go and make disciples."

We say we don't want to look stupid.

We say we don't want to appear intolerant of others.

We say we don't know how to "Go and make disciples."

Well, maybe you can learn by doing!

Jesus just says, "Go. . . go where I go. I'll be with you to the end of the age."

"Go," whether or not you're a good talker.

"Go," whether or not you believe everything you confess in the creeds.

"Go," whether or not anyone listens to you.

"Go. . . go," whether or not you are a preacher or an evangelist.

You wonder if this is such a good idea, for Jesus to send people like us who simply do not have our act together to go out and make other disciples.

Surely, Jesus should be more selective about whom he calls and sends: people who know their Bibles, people who have grown up in the church, people who go to worship every Sunday, people who have seminary training, people who can explain the Trinity.

“But no,” Jesus says, “You’ve been with me long enough. You have witnessed my preaching, teaching and healing. You can do it. And if this is not enough, ‘remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.’”

We can’t make anyone follow Jesus.

We can’t make ourselves follow Jesus.

What we have is the word from the living Christ that keeps on beckoning the worshipful and the doubtful into a path of discipleship.

And it is in the “going” on that path that Jesus reveals his presence to be true.

Last Sunday on Pentecost we heard again the risen Lord sending his disciples: “As the Father sent me, so I send you. Receive the Holy Spirit.”

“And I will ask the Father,” Jesus had told them, “and he will give you another Advocate, to be with you forever. . . the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything, and remind you of all that I have said to you.”

And that Spirit breaths faith into frightened and guilt-ridden disciples hiding behind locked doors, turning them into mighty apostles who turn the world upside down.

This is the Trinity in motion, the Trinity in mission, ever

walking alongside us, ever reaching toward the world
through us.

You see, the church is in mission because the Triune
God is in mission.

The church is on the move because God is on the
move.

The church gathers and goes out because God
gathers and goes out.

So the Letter of James encourages us to “be doers of
the word, and not merely hearers who deceive themselves.”

As the words of the old Sunday school song teach us,
“The church is not a building, the church is not a steeple,
the church is not a resting place, the church is a people.”

The church is a people in relationship because the

Trinity is God in relationship: “On that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you.”

Even before there was a dust creature named “Adam,” the LORD said, “Let *us* make humankind in *our* image, according to *our* likeness. . .” I’ve often wondered just who the LORD is speaking to.

Many have pointed out that the early church fathers described the Trinity using a term that is roughly translated “circle dance.”

“The Trinity was an eternal dance of the Father, Son and Spirit sharing mutual love, honor, happiness, joy and respect,” writes Brian McLaren in *A Generous Orthodoxy*.

“God’s act of creation means that God is inviting more and more beings into the eternal dance of Joy. Sin means

that people are stepping out of the dance. . . stomping on feet instead of moving with grace, rhythm and reverence. . .

In Jesus, God enters creation to restore the rhythm and beauty [of the dance] again.”

St. Paul writes that we should not relate to God as a slave who fears a master, but rather as a child in relationship to a loving parent: “For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received a spirit of adoption. When we cry, “Abba! [Daddy! Papi! Otecko!] Father!” it is that very Spirit bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God . . .”

And so, we join our voices to the “Holy, holy, holy” of the heavenly hosts, singing all glory be to God, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.