

## **“Every Christian’s Calling”**

**Matthew 28: 16-20**

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**TEXT: (NIV) <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 Lord Jesus Christ had only moments left with his disciples and he said to them “Go!” This is perhaps the best known passage in the New Testament for those Christians passionate about missions and evangelism. They rightly understand it as a command. It does say “Go!” It’s interesting, however, that the word translated “Go!” can just as easily be translated “Going” or even “As you go!” So, we are never quite able to say “Oh well...this call to the mission field is obviously for someone else...someone who is explicitly called to leave...to go to another location and to share the Good News of the Gospel.” Not really. God, in His Providence, actually gives us a word here that indeed means “Go!” but also means “As you are going!” So, we’re all in the lineup! Actually, sharing the Gospel is every Christian’s calling at some point as the Holy Spirit enables us to do so. That’s the good news. We are all, in the end, missionaries! Let’s consider that truth but first...let us pray.

I must say I’m glad to be here with all of you. I was in Minneapolis most of last week with two other men from our Pastoral team, Tim Brown and Nick MacDonald. We were at a prayer conference when the “storm of the century” hit the Midwest. That delayed our getting home and for a while there I wondered if I’d get home by Easter! It seems like the weather guys were a little hyper-caffeinated or something because it was just a good, honest snow storm, hardly a blizzard! But I was blessed to find that Donna had taken her little self outside and run our rather large snow blower. The driveway was perfect. She is a real trooper that way!

A quick story. A few winters ago I was also away when a big snow storm hit. She assured me that she could handle it but a funny thing happened. The guy who delivered the paper came by about 4 AM and tossed a gigantic Saturday newspaper onto the driveway. Then it snowed until noon time and stopped at about eight inches. Donna promptly went out there and roared down the driveway right over the buried newspaper and cut it into ten million shreds and jammed the snow blower beyond belief. A kindly neighbor spent an hour helping her clear out the debris! So...there was no reading the news that day!

Now that illustration of the news all chopped up and unreadable might be useful to us as we begin our annual missions month. Here is what I mean: if that newspaper that Saturday had

life or death news in it...if it had instructions for survival on planet earth and forever...no reader would have gotten the message! Well, as you know...the word "Gospel" means "Good news!" It has the prefix "eu" before it meaning "good" as in "eulogy" a "good word." We have the word "Euangelion" meaning "Good Preaching" or "Good Proclamation" or "Good News!" But what if that news was effectively all shredded and unreadable? What if it was run thru a theological snow blower and was not even recognizable when it came out? That, I fear, is the Gospel in our society! It is hardly recognizable and it falls to the church to proclaim it accurately and make sure people have a chance to hear it. Shorthand on this is that there are a hundred or more false Gospels out there and many people have no idea how misleading they really are.

So, if the newspaper had not been gobbled up...and if it was brought into the house and placed on the kitchen counter nice and dry and readable...what would it have said? What was the news that day? Perhaps something about the auto industry or the Detroit Pistons or events in the middle east? Let's ask this: what if the Gospel Good News was intact and printed on the front page...unmarred by the evil one and written in simple plain terms, what would *it* say? Can we as Christians write in a few lines exactly what the Gospel says and means? Well, happily the Apostle Paul did it for us! He wrote to the church in Corinth and made the Gospel very clear:

**1 Corinthians 15:1-6 (NIV) <sup>1</sup> Now, brothers, I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand. <sup>2</sup> By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain. <sup>3</sup> For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, <sup>4</sup> that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, <sup>5</sup> and that he appeared to Peter, and then to the Twelve. <sup>6</sup> After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep.**

The Gospel is not an invitation to know God as your "Anything Goes" Father in Heaven! The Gospel is not an invitation to do "Good works" and get God to like you so you can go to Heaven! No, the Gospel is this news: **"That Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, <sup>4</sup> that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures..."**

Jesus himself made it very clear to a man named Nicodemus in John Chapter Three that we must be "born again" by the Holy Spirit in order to really receive the Good News of the Gospel! But today's "Gospel" is being chewed up and shredded and made to be meaningless. It is amazing and terrifying to consider.

On Wednesday I was in the Hilton Hotel in Minneapolis and I got on an elevator. There I saw a smiling woman with a nametag that indicated she was in the ministry. So I greeted her and asked what group she was with as I had noticed about a thousand people suddenly checking in. And she said cheerfully that it was the annual meeting of the "Lesbian and Gay Alliance!" I can tell you that just then the door opened and I did not have a chance to preach but I was stunned. I went up to my room and prayed that the Holy Spirit would descend upon those people and

show them their lost estate! That someone...anyone...would bring them the Good News!

But you know friends...they usually do not want to hear it. No man or woman will receive Jesus who died for our sins unless...they believe and understand that they are sinners! What is sin? It is doing things your way instead of God's way. Take the gay folks for example. They have a right to meet and we all know that they suffer in their lifestyle. And on one level you can understand that they get together with each other because every human being needs acceptance. And many of them are polite and very good citizens no doubt. But God's Word says their lifestyle is abominable. Modern man says they were born that way. Maybe so. But that's irrelevant because I was born into lust and greed and pride and vanity and I can't live that way and expect the company of God! And this is why **"Jesus died for our sins!"** Not just to pay for them but to free us from their power over us! God be praised!

Allow me to digress a few minutes and tell you that I was not raised in a Christian home. I called myself an atheist from age 19 to age 29. But then at 29 when Donna was carrying our son Chris I began to really feel the weight of my lostness. I began to feel that without God I would die of loneliness someday. At first I did not realize it was my unresolved weight of sin that kept me from God. I just felt His Divine tug. And it was my niece Lynn who was faithful to her calling as found in our text. Lynn had been born again as a teenager and I had delighted in dismissing her testimony as silly. But that weekend my salvation came a few years after hers. It was she who invited me to church. It was she who was faithful to offer Christ to a potential disciple. It was she who took me to hear a Gospel preaching Pastor who simply shared the Good News...and it was that day...thirty four years ago this morning...February 6, 1977 that I was saved forever! Because God is good and his servant, a gentle college girl named Lynn was faithful! Christian, don't ever think that you cannot be used in the making of a disciple!

Consider our title: "Every Christian's Calling." Consider our text:

**16 Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go.**

Jesus is getting ready to depart. He has spent over a month with them since his Resurrection and now he takes them to a mountain. This makes perfect sense if we remember that in Exodus Chapter Nineteen God called Moses up to Mount Sinai and spoke to him! Then God gave Moses His laws and instructions. Now Jesus speaks to the Twelve less one...Judas who had been called out by his wickedness.

Perhaps Moses was filled with awe but maybe...just maybe...a little doubt. But here we see a remarkable statement about the spiritual condition of some of the disciples:

**17 When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted.**

What were they doubting? Is this not amazing? They had been with Jesus and they surely recognized him. What was there to doubt? Perhaps that he should be worshipped! Most of them fell down to worship the Risen Christ. Perhaps there

were other disciples there besides the Eleven and perhaps those other disciples were not convinced that Jesus was worthy of worship. But I think it was at least a couple of the men in the Eleven. But that is the problem with the Gospel: that we believe God took on sinless humanity and that Jesus of Nazareth was worthy of worship because he was also Jesus the Christ! That's part of the shredded Gospel we spoke of earlier. After all, if you share your faith with an unbeliever you will find they are quite comfortable with Jesus the man...but not Jesus the Christ deserving worship!

So, what did Jesus do as he looked out at them? What did Jesus do to correct their tentative view of him? Did Jesus do a handful of miracles to once again demonstrate his Deity? No. Miracles had been given and these men had seen plenty of them. No, Jesus made the ultimate Divine statement that only God in the flesh could make:

**18 Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.**

This is where the Gospel began! It began over the issue of authority! This theme comes up again and again! In the very first chapter of the oldest Gospel, that of Mark, we see Jesus cast out a demon and the people are stunned! We read:

**Mark 1:27 (NIV) <sup>27</sup> The people were all so amazed that they asked each other, "What is this? A new teaching--and with authority! He even gives orders to evil spirits and they obey him."**

Elsewhere the crowd would ask not "What is this?" but "Who is this?" Again and again those who opposed Jesus also asked where he got the authority to do and say what he did and said. Consider the leaders of the Synagogue seeing Jesus heal and hearing him teach and watching him chase the money changers out of the temple of God! So, they come to him all fired up and they demanded:

**Mark 11:28-30 (NIV) <sup>28</sup> "By what authority are you doing these things?" they asked. "And who gave you authority to do this?"**

So, when some doubted the Risen Christ standing in front of them, he had to remind them who he was and how he alone was qualified to give them orders by saying:

**"All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me."**

What does that mean? It means that the Christ, the Second Person of the Trinity, is the Executive Officer of this ship called creation! He had been given the wheel of Heaven and he serves His Father as the High Priest and as the Messiah and as the King of Kings! Everything in the creation was made by him and for him and so now that he has personally come down and made payment for the sins of those who want to know God...he tells them that he is in charge! And then he gives them their marching orders based on this authority:

**19 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.**

Remember last week when we said always ask what the “Therefore” is “there for?” Clearly this is the time to do that! Jesus just said “I have all authority and because of that...therefore...here is what I want my servants to do!” And he wants us to go out in his name...under the power of the Triune God...Father, Son and Holy Spirit and do what? Make believers? Make converts? Make people who know what to say if they are asked if they are Christians? No more than that! He tells us to make disciples! To make students who will obey him and serve him!

And then he makes a promise. A promise that is given to eliminate all fear and trembling. He says to them:

**20 and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."**

Isn't that exciting? Jesus says “I'll be with you!” Oh how we need to keep that in mind! We need to rest in this promise from the Risen Christ...that he will be with us! That he will be right there! That he will keep us from gobbling up the Good news in some theological snow blower if we will just be prepared to share that Good news. And to do so, we must go much deeper in learning how...to pray. That will be our topic for March and April as we approach Easter.

On that Sunday thirty four years ago, I heard the Gospel...but I had no idea what to do. I simply wanted somehow to get in on it! I wanted to cry out “OK Jesus...how do I do this? How do I say count me in?” I sat there wondering how to send Jesus a signal?

Then the Pastor, Pastor Stew was his name, stepped up to the Communion Table and began to explain how we needed to feed upon Christ in our hearts. How he alone could feed our souls spiritually and supernaturally. But because we are physical beings we need some way of acting that out...of living it. And so God had given us Christians the Lord's Supper as a way of regularly saying to Jesus “I trust you as my Savior...please feed my soul.” And I sat there and thought “I'm becoming a Christian right now...today...by talking this Communion.” Not because the bread and juice had any magic but because taking them as symbols of his body and blood...was the signal I needed to send.

All because of a handful of very faithful people. My niece Lynn. Pastor Stew. And the person of the Holy Spirit who had shown them that they shared in every Christian's calling. To spread the Good News.

Let us pray.