

Genesis 1:1-2:4a
2 Corinthians 13:11-13
Matthew 28:16-20
Psalm 8

In the beginning.....

We hear this morning about the story of creation ... about how God created the world ... everything about it and everything in it. We hear that a wind from God swept over the face of the waters as God was creating. That wind from God we know to be the Holy Spirit. It was part of the original creation. We know that the gospel of John echoes the Book of Genesis and the beginnings of all things in its testimony about Jesus. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. All things came into being through him and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it." *John 1:1-5* You see, there always were three ... God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. God created this magnificent, unimaginable, intricate and complex world and placed human beings here as the stewards of all that was created. We are the trustees of all that we have inherited. We were given a mission on this earth the moment we were created. Our mission was, and is, to watch over all and take care of all that God had created. And from the moment that we fell away from God, God has been calling us back.

You see, God's on a mission. When God sent Jesus Christ into the world, he made a bold and undeniable statement: His love for His creation and all that is in it and His desire to be reconciled to it. God wants only for his creation to be restored to the original paradise that he created. He said to Jesus: "Go!" and Jesus did. He became a human being so that we could know the nature of God, so that we could be healed of all that makes us less than whole and so that we could know the magnitude of God's love for us and His desire to have us back! When Jesus obeyed God's call to him to "Go," he gave up his ability to be in control. Jesus deferred to God's mission and obeyed. What must it take in terms of the depth of love and the power of commitment ... when you are already in heaven with the Father ... to voluntarily leave that paradise to come to retrieve us? It's hard to imagine the strength of that much love.

We find ourselves this morning in the middle of God's mission having heard from Jesus himself the commandment to "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.” We find ourselves conscripted into God’s mission by Jesus himself. As followers of Jesus Christ ... as his disciples ... we’ve been drawn into continuing the work on God’s mission that Jesus Christ came to earth to share with us. It’s been modelled for us *by* Jesus. It has been shared with us *by* Jesus. It has been imposed upon us *by* Jesus.

Now when Jesus talks about “all nations,” he’s not talking about nation states the way we think of them today. He’s talking about *all* the people of the earth ... all the tribes, all the neighborhoods, all the ethnicities, all the languages, all the cultures, all the people that we refer to as foreigners, Jesus refers to them as our neighbors. And he tells us to “Go” just as God told him to “Go.” Continue the mission, God’s mission ... to love, to bless, and to be reconciled to all creation.

“Go” ... well, I’m a bit of a homebody myself. I like what’s familiar and somewhat predictable. I like certain foods and certain music and certain smells and, of course, I like to speak English and be understood. I want to sleep in my own bed at night and I’m very comforted by having familiar things around me ... my stuff. But that’s not what Jesus is telling us to do. He’s not telling us to be homebodies. He’s telling us to “Go.”

But there’s more than just a commandment here. There’s also a promise. Jesus says to them, “I am with you always, to the end of the age.” And we know that Jesus keeps his promises. Can I “go” if I know that Jesus is going with me? Perhaps. It makes it easier to contemplate ... to know that Jesus will be with us wherever we go and for always. He’s not going to abandon us.

Last Sunday we celebrated the arrival of the Holy Spirit and marveled at the dramatic entrance it made. It was an arrival that we certainly couldn’t overlook and neither could the disciples who received it. With the tongues of fire over their heads and a foreign language on their lips they went bursting out of that upper room to find that they didn’t have to go very far in order to “Go into all the world!” Through God’s magnificent timing, the world had come to them. People from the four corners of the known world were in Jerusalem for the Festival of Weeks. All the disciples had to do was step outside their own door and the world was right there in front of them. And they did as Jesus had instructed. They had no time to think about it or plan for it. It simply happened because we were open to it. They made disciples of the people they met in the streets. About 3,000 people were baptized as a result of that one encounter with the Holy Spirit.

They were continuing God’s mission that Jesus had brought to earth and then conscripted his disciples to continue. You see, we don’t *have* a mission. It’s God’s mission, not ours. God goes

ahead of us. God is already in the streets. God is already in the workplaces. God is already in the places that we tend to frequent. He's waiting for us. Remember, Jesus is with us until the end of the age.

Jesus has asked us to share the good news of God's love and God's redemption of his creation ... *all* of his creation ... and that includes us. As members of the body of Christ ... the Church ... we are to continue with God's mission that was brought to us by Jesus. The amazing thing is that when we get out there, we find out who we really are. We discover our identity as members of the body of Christ ... and as faithful disciples of Jesus Christ. The Church finds its identity when it participates in the mission of the Triune God ... Father ... Son ... and Holy Ghost. All are with us. All sustain us as members of Christ's body, the Church. We haven't been and won't be abandoned.

The headlines of the news of the world keep making their way into my thoughts as I write this sermon about God's mission to reconcile us and our original commission to be the stewards of God's creation and Jesus' commandment to "Go." It seems to me that we can't sit on the sidelines. We have to go out into the world. We must be 'in' the world without being ruled by the world. That means we can't avoid being political. We do need to avoid being partisan, but being political seems to be a requirement if we are to proclaim the good news to all the world. We can't stand by with our eyes closed and our hands in our pockets and our voices silent and pretend like what goes on in the world is not something we need to be involved in. We can't avoid being involved in the world. God's involved in the world. Jesus is and was certainly involved in the world. Jesus spoke truth to power. He was very much in the world. He modelled for us how to be in the world. He showed us what it means to get involved with God's creation. This is God's mission after all, not ours. If we are going to fulfill our vows to God when we were baptized, we have to do as God asks and as Jesus modelled. We can't sit on the bench and pretend we're in the game.

When we are allowed to be part of God's mission, we find out who we are ... and whose we are. And we have been promised the power of the Holy Spirit and we have been promised that Jesus will be with us until the end of the age. There always were three ... Father, Son and Holy Ghost ... and there still are three and there always will be.

Thanks be to God.

AMEN.