

## **“Being One Who is Sent”**

### **Matthew 28:16-20**

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

As we gather this morning on this Holy Trinity Sunday, our text gives us this undeniable evidence of the Trinity, invoked in this command by Christ, Himself. Lutheran Theologian, Dr. Richard Lenski writes in his commentary on St. Matthew’s Gospel, “In the Scriptures the three divine persons are named singly a large number of times, often two are named together, and at times all three; yet this is the only instance in the Scriptures in which we have the Trinity named as such...This is God’s full name; He is one God, yet exists in three persons. The mystery of His Being, of this one Essence in three persons, no human mind will ever fathom.” And Dr. Lenski is right. You cannot hope to fathom the incredible truth that is the Holy Trinity. All you can do is simply believe through the faith you have been granted by the Holy Spirit. And so, we turn and focus on the action—the activity of the persons—namely the act of sending.

I’d like you all to think for a moment about how often you send others to complete a task on your behalf. A simple request sending a child to get the mail, sending your spouse to pick up dinner, or, as we wrap up this graduation season, sending your child to college to prayerfully use all you have taught them as they take their next step in life. The Triune God is a mystery to you and unlike anything your worldly understanding and experience can grasp. Yet, though your feeble, sinful flesh cannot begin to fathom the wonder and the greatness that is the Holy Trinity apart from God’s Word, you can very clearly understand the work that the Trinity has called you—has sent you—to do. When you ask others to complete a task for you, you are placing the utmost trust in their ability to complete it. They have been given the content of the task and the end goal, and you send them off to complete it on your behalf. In our text this morning, Christ has sent the Apostles to complete the task of proclaiming the Gospel throughout the world. He has given them the content of the message through the Holy Spirit in the Word of Scripture, and they have the ability to complete it because of the Father’s grace and forgiveness which has been granted to them on behalf of His Son, Jesus Christ.

Dr. Lenski goes on to say this in his commentary, “We may say that because of...its incomprehensibility God would not have revealed it to us, but because of the plan of salvation He had to reveal it to a certain degree; for our salvation we must know that the Father sent the Son, that the Son came for our redemption, and that the Father and the Son sent the Spirit for our sanctification.” As those who have been called by

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Christ, you have also been sent by the Father and the Son through the Holy Spirit to proclaim God's word throughout the nations. And that is a command that stands for all time. It is for you, for me, for every generation that has come before and will come after. That is what the Lord has done and charged His Church with in the Great Commission. And what a gift and a blessing it is to be the stewards of that command. But you are not stewards in the sense that you guard and sit on the message like the shrewd servant in the parable of the talents. Just as Christ has proclaimed in the parable of the Sower, God's Word must be spread to all those who are lost, praying that, by the gracious work of the Holy Spirit, the message of the Son's eternal salvation takes root and blossoms in their hearts, that they might turn to the Father in repentance.

Being one who is sent means doing the work that you have been sent to do, because the Holy Spirit has already worked that faith in your own hearts. As Christians, your calling in life is God-given, and you should use the opportunities in your lives to do that which he has called you to do. Preachers should preach. Teachers should teach. Chefs should cook. But, within the framework of these vocations, the Christian must always remember that God is the author of all things, and the opportunity He has given them should be used in service to the Gospel whenever possible. The people of God are saved by the power of the Gospel and the faith that is given through the Word, and as such should spread the good news of that faith to all who would hear it. Because that is the Trinitarian mission you have been sent to carry out, for it is God's desire that all men should be saved. And you must never lose sight of the content of that saving Gospel, as Paul says in 1 Cor 15:3-5, "For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that He was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, and that He appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve." You are God's people—His Holy Church—redeemed by the blood of Christ, made pure before the Father on His account, and reassured of that salvation by the Sacraments and the Word brought to you by the Holy Spirit.

The mission of the Church is the mission of God, and the mission of God is the salvation of His people. And that mission belongs to both God and the Church. God reveals Himself to you as a God who sends, and He has chosen to do His mission through sending His Church. Having chosen to work through His Church, and thus through His people, He gives you the means to proclaim the saving Gospel to the world through the Means of Grace, and through called ministers who exercise those means publicly. It is Christ's Gospel, and of course He could spread it Himself, but He has decided to do that through simple means and through His people. He has chosen no other way than through His Word and the Sacraments, administered rightly through His bride, the Church. But

that does not mean that church is the only place the saving message of Christ is received.

Being here in this building is not the reason that you receive Christ. You receive Christ here within these 4 walls because the Word of God is being preached by one who is being sent and being heard by all who need the saving Gospel of Jesus Christ. But you have all been sent to proclaim the Gospel. You are a royal priesthood as the Apostle says in 1 Peter 2:9. You have been sent to proclaim the Word to all those in your sphere of influence. That proclamation, that preaching, is the central activity of the mission of the Church. The Greek word for “evangelize” means, more literally, “to good news.” In the process of “good news-ing” people, it does not simply mean to testify about your faith; it means to be one who is sent to further God’s mission. The Apostle Paul often refers to himself as “the one who is sent,” and a believer who is preaching the good news of the Gospel was sent by God to do it. Not simply to tell someone else about your faith, but to point them to the fact that they are sinful human beings in need of the Savior, and then “good news” them with the saving message of Christ’s death and resurrection to remove the judgment for that sin before the Father.

The Gospel directs the sinner solely to the person and work of Christ for forgiveness, which is the core purpose of the Gospel. The Gospel not only tells you about the redemptive work of Christ, but directs you where that forgiveness might be appropriated in the Means of Grace. It is the work of the Church to spread the Gospel to the whole world, to all nations as Jesus says in our text, directing them to make use of Christ as their mediator, to receive forgiveness on His account through the work of the Holy Spirit who turns them to the Father in repentance. This is what it means to be one who is sent and do the work of the Trinitarian mission. You were not sent as a group once for all time, but are continually sent as a Church, and individually every time you gather around the Means of Grace to receive His promised forgiveness. Every time the Gospel is preached and heard, it is a continuation of the command of Christ to go forth baptizing and teaching.

As Christian people, you cannot lose sight of the fact that, your faith is always personal, but never private. The salvation of God’s people is dependent upon the saving Word of Christ’s death and resurrection being preached to the whole world, a preaching which God has chosen to use you and me to do. He has sent you out into this lost and dying world to proclaim the saving message, and you should willingly do it in praise and thanksgiving for the glorious gift of salvation that Christ has freely given to you. Not out of compulsion or the necessity to check a “Christian box.” The message of Christ that

you have been sent to proclaim should well up inside you to the point of bursting, so that it is quite literally all you can think about and talk about, like a 2 year old who won't stop talking because they know how to now, and they want to talk about anything they can with everyone they meet (and then ask "why?" every time you answer a question).

Jesus tells the Apostles in John 20:21-22, "'As the Father has sent Me, even so I am sending you.' And when He had said this, He breathed on them and said to them, 'Receive the Holy Spirit.'" The Holy Trinity is the entire content of what it means to be one that is being sent. Just as the Father sent the Son, and the Father and the Son together send the Holy Spirit who works faith in your hearts, so you have been sent by the Trinity to proclaim the excellencies of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light, as we read in Peter's first epistle. Your faith wants to explode out of you and proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ to all nations, but your Old Adam is stifling it, telling it to sit down and keep quiet, that nobody wants to hear that nonsense. As Luther says in the Small Catechism, "...the Old Adam in us should by daily contrition and repentance...die with all sins and evil desires, and that a new man should daily emerge and arise to live before God in righteousness and purity forever." That new man is the one you lean on, because it is the person and work of Christ that makes him new, a regeneration that took place and was appropriated to you in your baptisms, which ought to be remembered every single day. And in that baptismal grace you find the strength you need to stifle that Old Adam and put him in his place.

In the Holy Trinity, you have "God's full name." You know the full name of God through His self-revelation to you in His Word found in Scripture. Here in these Words, you find the full counsel of God—nothing more, and nothing less. The entirety of what you need to proclaim God to the people around you has been given to you in the Words of Holy Scripture, and that has been expounded upon in a Biblically pure way in the Lutheran Confessions. Christ has made you new in the atonement He won upon the cross, granting you eternal life and salvation. The Father sent Jesus to die on that cross to atone for the sins of the entire world, not just a select few. Every single person around you in the world is one whom Christ has died for, and the Father and the Son have sent you as His Church, through the activity of the Holy Spirit, to proclaim that glorious truth to all those people who are still wandering in the darkness. So, what does it mean to be one who is sent? It means to live your baptismal identity by spreading the good news of Christ's Gospel to all people, no matter your calling in this world. Being one whom Christ has saved and has faith in that salvation, be one who is sent. Abide by the Great Commission and go forth, baptizing and teaching all nations...in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.