

Pastor's Message
June 7, 2020

Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

What a great turn out for our Pentecost Parade!!! It was great to see all of you, it certainly has been a long time since we have seen each other in person and it was great to see all those smiles on the people that we visited. In spite of how much we love being together, for everyone's safety we will continue with Zoom Worship at 10:30 on Sunday mornings until further notice. Click on the link below to connect to Sunday's worship

This week we will include in our service the breaking of the bread and the drinking of the wine that Jesus has commanded us to do "in remembrance of him." I invite you to join in this communal meal. To do so, have a piece of bread or a cracker and something to drink available. As part of the service, I will invite you to prepare the/your table at which time you will place the food and drink in front of you. We will "eat of the bread" and "drink of the wine" together after we have listened to the words of institution and prayed the Lord's prayer.

It has been a hard and heart breaking week for our nation as the reality of unjust practices towards our brothers and sisters of color have been exposed and a call for justice and peace for all people has been shouted throughout the nation both with people's presence and with their voices. I do not condone the violence and destruction that has occurred, but I do believe it is time for us as God's church to stand up against the injustices that underlie the pain and anger of our black and brown brothers and sisters. In our baptism we were entrusted with the responsibilities "to care for others and work for justice and peace." And there is no better time than the present to figure out exactly what "caring for others and working for justice and peace" needs to look like as we move forward as God's people.

Hope to see you Sunday. God's Peace

Pastor Denise

Matthew 28:16-20

16 Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. 17 When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. 18 And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.

19 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, 20 and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

Sermon

Grace and Peace to you from God our Father and Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior. AMEN

In the past two weeks many high school seniors have put on the graduation gowns and mortar boards with the dangling tassels, they have been photographed over and over by family and friends, and they have heard commencement speeches that reminded them that this is not the end, this is just the beginning.

And although in this time of the pandemic, it was not the usual pomp and circumstance of graduations in the past, it still marked the beginning of the life they had been preparing for and they were now more than ever in the past encouraged to go and do great and amazing things.

They were encouraged to go and use what they have learned and go and become the person they have been growing into for the past 17 or 18 years. Go and make their dreams come true and create new and better ways for people to live together in a world that respects and cares for all people and the world that we live in.

And although we all know that learning and growing into who God has created us to be did not end when we crossed that stage and moved that tassel from one side to the other, we also know that the symbolic moving of the tassel from one side to the other sent us out into the world full of challenges and surprises, full of new contexts and new relationships, some of which our school

days had prepared us for; but most of which we just had to figure out as we went along.

I find this morning's gospel passage, which is known as the Great Commission as Jesus' commencement address for the disciples as they meet up with the risen Christ for the last time on a mountain in Gallilee. They are told that this is the beginning of the rest of your lives – and you Peter, James, John, Andrew, Bartholomew, Thomas, Philip, Matthew, James (the son of Alphaeus), Thaddaeus, and Simon – go and do amazing things, go out there and make disciples of ALL nations: by teaching others what I have taught you, by serving others as I have served you and by doing for others what I have done for and with you.

And unlike most high school graduates who in their ripe old ages of 18 and 19 seem quite confident about their readiness to take on the challenges that they are about to face, I get the feeling that the disciples are shaking in their sandals and they are not at all confident that they are ready to say good-bye to their teacher and mentor, who had come to share the good news of the love, the mercy and the grace of the Father and the promise of God's kingdom coming here on earth as it is in heaven.

They are not ready to say good-bye to the one who had the courage to cross boundaries and interact with the foreigners and the outcasts of society.

They are not ready to say good-bye to the one who had the power to heal and cast out demons. They are not ready to say good-bye and go out on their own.

Couldn't they have just a little more training? Couldn't they have just a little more time to sit at the feet of the master? Or better yet couldn't they just go back to the way things were before they met Jesus, working in the family business and let someone else take on the challenges and the responsibilities of being Christ's disciple?

No it doesn't say any of that in the text, but that is truly what I bring to the text especially today as our nation is in both a health crisis and a humanitarian crisis.

As I listen carefully to the words in this text and I hear Jesus both command and commission us to go and make disciples, and to teach others everything that Jesus has commanded us to do. I really have no idea how to do that right here and right now.

Jesus, I am so willing to follow you. Jesus, I am so willing to study your stories and I am even willing to give a loud AMEN from time to time. Jesus, I am willing to show up and sit at your feet and listen. I really am willing to assist you, but really Jesus this commissioning thing, I really don't think it is for me

And even after all my whining Jesus doesn't change his expectations of me.

Instead, he reminds all us and he commands (not recommends or invites), he commands us to do the work of the kingdom. Go, make disciples.

He commands and he commissions us to go and work with the people that God brings into our lives and to nurture and support them in their lives of discipleship.

He commands and he commissions us to go and not only teach one another the ways of the kingdom, but to hold one another accountable to obey the ways of the kingdom.

Jesus called us, Jesus taught us, Jesus empowered us and now in this text it is very clear and to the point that Jesus commissions us to be his disciples

And I ask myself this morning have we (not just you and me) but have we who call ourselves Christians lost touch with what Jesus has called us to do? Have we as mainline Christians become so ensnared with budgets, buildings and the BIZ-E-NESS of programs and projects that we have lost sight of the great commission?

Have we as mainline Christians been satisfied with being fans of discipleship versus being disciples?

In this morning's text, Jesus commissions his first followers, not to be supporters or fans or even consumers of the good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ; but Jesus calls his first disciples and Jesus calls us to be his disciples.

And through the gift of God's Holy Spirit, we are prepared, we are inspired, we are empowered and we are emboldened not sit on the sidelines, but to DO our part of the work that God has for us to do to bring about God's kingdom here on Earth.

And with so many of our brothers and sisters of color in pain, we are called to wrestle with and then act upon what we are called to do as Jesus' disciples to bring God's kingdom here on Earth so that ALL people of ALL colors and of ALL nations may experience the love, the mercy and grace of God through not just our thoughts and prayers, but through our actions.

Jesus commands and commissions us: to use our gifts to love one another as he loved us, to use our gifts to go and make disciples, to use our gifts to teach one another by modeling and mentoring and motivating each other to obey the commandments Jesus has taught us.

And as today's text takes us once again to that place and time where the first disciples are standing on that mountain stage ready to be sent out, let us put on our spiritual gowns and mortar boards with the dangling tassel and let us hear Jesus say GO, GO and make disciples.

And then let us trust the power of the Holy Spirit that dwells within us, and with confidence move that tassel from one side to the other, responding to God's call with "Yes Lord we are ready, willing and able to do the work that you have called us, commissioned us and commanded us to do."

For on this day, as we move into a new phase of being Christ's disciples; we are only at the beginning of spreading the grace, the mercy and the love of Christ to ALL people to bring about God's kingdom here on Earth as it is in heaven.

AMEN

The Blessing

The holy Three, the holy One
increase your hope,
strengthen your faith,
deepen your love,
and + grant you peace.

Amen.