

Trinity Sunday 2011 A
Texts: Genesis 1:1-2:4a
Psalm 8
2 Corinthians 13: 11-13
Matthew 28: 16-20

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

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

I don't think there is anyone happier that I am back in the pulpit today than Keith. Ever since I came to St. Matthew's Keith has teased me about not being in town on Trinity Sunday so that he would have to preach on what is considered one of the hardest Sundays of the year to preach.

In the spirit of full disclosure I have to admit to you that originally when the preaching rota for the year was developed in December, I did have Keith down to preach today. But that was only after I looked at the preceding four years and saw that I preached on Trinity Sunday for the last two.

If there is one Sunday where the preacher has the greatest chance of falling into a heresy and leading a congregation astray it is Trinity Sunday, when most preachers try, and fail, to explain the greatest mystery of the Faith.

For the last two years I did indeed preach on the doctrine of the Trinity, that foundational belief of the Church. It is the foundational belief because the Trinity is our best attempt with our limited vocabulary and cognition to explain the totality of God and God's relationship with us as the Church has come to understand it.

Today I am not going to preach on the doctrine of the Trinity, but rather the result of believing that God is Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Our gospel reading this morning is the very end of Matthew's gospel. Matthew's gospel starts with giving the genealogy of Jesus and moves into describing his birth, his ministries of baptizing, healing and teaching, his miracles, his death and resurrection and it culminates in what is known as the Great Commission-the giving of God's power to the disciples so that all on earth may know of God's love and God's desire for an intimate relationship with all humanity.

The power of these last four verses of Matthew's gospel is that they weren't just spoken to the eleven; these words are spoken to us.

The power of these last four verses is that we are given the same directions and the same gifts that the eleven were given.

The power of these last four verses is that they weren't just spoken in the past tense, but rather they are spoken in the present and future tenses as well. There is no last word in Matthew's gospel. This gospel is open ended. It is as if we are watching a TV show and all of a sudden appears on the screen, "To Be Continued."

From the very beginning of this gospel, starting with the genealogy and ending with the promise of being with us until the end of the age, Matthew shows us that Jesus is truly the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, and in between the beginning and end is a life we are being shown how to live.

Now, I have a confession to make. I have a guilty pleasure that rolls around every six months or so. This pleasure came about so unexpectedly and is so unlike me that I am embarrassed to admit it.

There is a reality TV show that I like to watch on Sunday nights. Now reality TV shows tend to really irritate me because they are anything but reality. These shows are contrived, manipulated, and bring out the worst in those that are involved with them.

This particular show is Donald Trump's Celebrity Apprentice. Now, if there really was truth in advertising it would be named "Celebrities Behaving Badly," but I doubt anyone would watch if that was the name because there is so much of that in the news that it would come as no surprise.

In this particular rendition of reality, sixteen celebrities are chosen to compete against one another in order to raise money for their respective charities. They do so by being on teams and accomplishing different types of business tasks.

Sometimes they have to develop a marketing strategy or promotional event for certain products. Week after week the person who is considered the weak link on the losing team for that challenge is brought into the boardroom and "fired." This occurs every week until the last two remaining players work towards the final task and the winner of the task receives \$250,000 for his or her charity.

What has always intrigued me about the show has to do with its name, Celebrity Apprentice. Here are people who are famous in their own right for some reason and they are putting themselves under the power of Donald Trump in order to

wheel and deal to raise money for charities. These people are becoming apprentices of Donald Trump.

To become an apprentice is to sit at the feet and learn from a master. It is to invest one's life to the development of the skill needed to complete the work that the master has laid before the apprentice.

To be an apprentice is to be part of a process, a process that never ends, but rather is passed down to other apprentices. An apprentice works towards perfection, it is not expected from the get-go. With an excellent Master the failures and mistakes of the apprentice are used not to "fire" or dismiss the apprentice, but rather to further educate and teach more deeply the skills needed to move beyond the mistake.

So what does our gospel reading have to do with this TV show? Quite simply, the word "disciple" can also be translated as "apprentice."

For a Christian, to be an apprentice is to put ourselves under the power of Jesus Christ. To be an apprentice is to invest our lives and our skills to learning and sharing the story of God as Father, Son and Holy Ghost and the difference that has made in our lives.

To be an apprentice of Jesus Christ means to accept and live under a wholly different reality than our world would have us believe is desirable or even possible.

As apprentices of Jesus Christ we need not fear being brought into some ethereal boardroom and being fired if we mess up or fail at our task. We are under the power of a much different master who tells us to try again and to remember that he is with us no matter how long it takes.

It is as if our task is to create the vision Jesus has set before us and it is His hands that surround our hands on the hammer and chisel and guides them in the making of something beautiful and awe-inspiring and eternal.

It is as if, like Michelangelo, Christ guides our hands so that humanity that is under the cold marble of sin is released to be what it truly was meant to be from the beginning of time.

We could not do this work if it were not for the Trinity. We couldn't be Christ's apprentices if God was not Father, if God was not Son and if God was not Holy Spirit.

The result of the belief in the Trinity is that we are made an intimate part of God, not just a part of a part of God, but rather we are made a part of all of God.

God gives to us God's self in Jesus Christ. Christ gives to us the power given to Him by God so that God's work in the world can move towards fulfillment.

We are given the gift of God the Holy Spirit so that we will not forget that God is with us even to the end of the age. It is that remembering that will carry us forward into and through the work we have to do.

In other words, dear friends, the story of God, the story of St. Matthew's is very much "to be continued."

Amen.

