

Emmanuel Ev. Lutheran Church—Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod  
Pentecost 1—Holy Trinity  
June 7, 2020  
Sermon by Pastor Justin Gran  
**Theme: *The mission hasn't changed***

—Matthew 28:16-20

The new normal. What is the new normal going to look like? Is curbside pickup and masked waiters the new normal? Is elbow bumping instead of handshaking the new normal? Is working from home and telecommuting going to be the new normal for many companies? Or what about church? Is this the new normal? Signing up to attend, spacing in pews, online Bible study, single use bulletins. What's the new normal? What's going to go back to normal and when? I can't answer all those questions now, but I can reassure you of this: While church looks different, at least for the time being, the mission hasn't changed! And what is the mission?

In our lesson for today from Matthew 28, Jesus gave his disciples the Great Commission. It happened some time in the 40-day period after Jesus rose from dead and before he ascended into heaven. Jesus had told his disciples to go to a certain mountain in Galilee. As he approached them, they began to worship him and then he said, ***"All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 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, 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 Christian church of all ages has endured pandemics, persecution, wars, disasters, civil unrest, injustice, even collapses of kingdoms and empires. Through all of that, through two thousand years of history, the mission hasn't changed!

A lot has change recently, but some things never change. Satan is still at work playing his same old games sowing doubt in God's Word. It still pleases the devil very much when there is division and discord in the church. Our sinful nature still seeks opportunities to sin and assert itself over others. We still allow ourselves to be driven by something other the gospel—Fear, doubt, despair. So many things can cause us to lose sight God's unchanging grace and the mission he has laid before us especially we when look at the devastation that sin has caused.

And the devastation is great. Ever since sin entered the world through Adam and Eve's disobedience there has been murder, jealousy, injustice, hatred, violence...look around; the same sins rear their ugly head. And it's not just out there. It's easy to spot all those sins out there, but those very same sins come out of our very own hearts. I can't confess the sins of other people, I have to confess my own. This is finally what it boils down to: I haven't loved God as I should. I haven't loved my neighbor as myself. For that I deserve God's wrath and just punishment. And so do you.

What's the answer? What's the solution to sin itself? The only answer id the grace of God in Jesus Christ. Long before Jesus gave believers the great commission on the mountain in Galilee, The triune God launched a rescue mission to save all people, all nations from the clutches of sin and death. In Genesis 3:15 God promised to send a Savior, born of a woman, that would crush Satan's head and undo the havoc of sin. The Son of God was born of a woman, born under law to redeem the world, to save all people from sin. He lived and he loved. He loved God and delighted in his will. He loved his neighbor. He humbled himself to serve and to give has life as a ransom payment for the sins of the world. On his cross he suffered the just wrath of God for not only your sins, but for the sins of the world. And there on his cross, he declared his mission accomplished as he said, ***"It is finished."*** He declared your sins and the sins of the world paid for.

Days or weeks later, the risen Lord Jesus drew near to his disciples on the mountain. The Lord still draws near to you today in a different way. He doesn't tell you to go to a mountain in Galilee to meet him. He meets you in the waters of your baptism where your sins were washed away; where the triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, wrote his name on you saying you are his. In baptism you were connected to the God who created you, the God who redeemed you, and the God who calls you and keeps you in the one true faith. He meets you in his Word. He puts his promises of grace and peace and forgiveness down in writing and he signed it with the blood of his own Son. He draws near in Holy Communion with is his true body and blood, given and shed for you. This grace of God and the way it comes to you hasn't changed.

The triune God has saved you, and now he sends you. You don't have to look far to see that our world is in desperate need of what we as Christians have to offer. The world around us needs God's grace, God's love in Jesus Christ, just as much as we do. When we first transitioned to online-worship it was a global pandemic that

gripped our world with fear. As we return to worship on campus we see civil unrest, racial tensions, injustice, violence, and looting in our society. The mission of the church hasn't changed. Our triune God is not merely concerned with physical preservation and saving people from viral infection—he desires all people to be eternally saved and to come to the knowledge of truth. The Lord works not merely to bring about an outward civil change in society; he changes hearts with the gospel. When love and peace are lacking in our world and in our life, it's not just a matter of trying harder to love and to live in peace. Only the gospel, the good news of God's love in Jesus Christ truly heals and truly brings peace and change to sinner's heart.

And that's exactly the tool the Lord equips us with in order to carry out our mission—the gospel of Christ's love. ***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, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.***

Jesus gave his church baptism as means through which God's grace comes to sinners and makes them God's children. And the Lord doesn't command us to use some rare or exclusive element for baptism. He commands us to simply use water. Think about that. Even here in a desert we have water in abundance. Water is the most basic human need and it is in abundant supply. God's grace is for all and it is in abundant supply. But it's not just plain water that does something in baptism. It's not just a symbol, it's water used with God's Word, the very words Jesus spoke in Matthew, in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. And by the waters of baptism the triune God brings salvation from sin and death. Through baptism he joins us to himself along with all believers of all nations. Paul said to the Galatians ***“For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.”***

Jesus goes on as he gives the Great Commission, he said, ***“Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing... and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.”*** Baptism and teaching God's Word go hand in hand. Through the gospel in the written Word, God also works faith and brings salvation to a person's heart. Often, the Word of God is compared to food and water. Just as food and water are essential to physical life, God's word is essential to maintain spiritual life. And Jesus instructs us to teach all of God's word. That starts with us learning and taking it to heart for ourselves so that we may believe and have eternal life. And then, because we believe it, we speak it.

The world, sadly, hasn't changed. Sin and grief and strife abound. But God's grace in Christ abounds all the more. Grace that covers my sin and yours. And the mission hasn't changed—it is our mission to extend that grace to our neighbor. And remember this: You're not alone. As Jesus commissioned his disciples he reminded them, ***“And surely I am with you always to the very end of the age.”*** He is with you. And not like when someone who says, “I can't be there physically, but I'll be there in spirit. I'll be thinking about you.” No, he is truly God with us. As Paul ended his letter the Corinthians, he echoed that truth... He said the God of love and peace will be with you. And so I'll leave you with that same reminder—the Grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen.