

St. Mark's Lutheran Church, Fairborn, Ohio

Sermon by Christa Clelan - June 19, 2011

As I began to write any sermon I like to do some research. (It can be very embarrassing to stand in front of a group of people and preach something that is not Biblical correct☺) Sometimes when I conduct research I find some gems. And I found this one.

A foreign exchange student from India came to California to study; and while she was here she decided to go to a Catholic mass with her host family. After the service was over her host family asked her what she thought of the service. She said well "it was interesting but I don't understand why you did not pray for the west coast" Confused the family asked what she was referring to. The foreign exchange student explained "well you prayed for the Father, the son, and the whole east coast, why not the west?"

Today is Trinity Sunday; however, the word "trinity" is not mentioned in the Bible. We say, "I believe in the "Trinity" but what does that really mean? The "Trinity" is a description of the unique relationship of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. There are many references to the Trinity in scripture such as today's scripture from Matthew which states: 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."

One of the better known scriptures referring to the Trinity comes from Gospel of Mark the 1st chapter. "As Jesus was coming up out of the water [at his baptism], he saw heaven being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. And a voice came from heaven: "You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased."

In today's scripture Jesus emphasized the importance of the Holy Spirit. To the fearful and worried disciples he gave them the assurance that he was not going to abandon them. Jesus says, "And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age." The disciples had been used to seeing Jesus every day and they needed to get weaned away from his physical presence now that he would ascend into heaven.

As long as he was here on earth, Jesus was limited to one place at a time, but the Holy Spirit's presence can be everywhere at the same time.

Now, I teach youth at Abiding Christ and I have to be honest. I am glad I am here this Sunday because I believe this is one of the hardest Sundays to teach our children. I've used many visual illustrations to try and explain the Trinity to our kids. The first year I was at ACLC I used an egg--you have the egg shell, the egg yolk, and the egg white. They are three distinct parts--but they are all EGG. The next year I explain the Trinity is by referring to water--a glass of water, an ice cube, or steam--it is different but all WATER. Last year I used the explanation of St. Patrick who explained the Trinity with a shamrock. The three parts of the shamrock represented the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit--but at the same time they were all SHAMROCK. We have God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit--they are three distinct persons but are all GOD.

What makes the Trinity unique is that God is no longer anonymous. We all have names. Deb Geier is your council president. Mary Ann Blazer is your organist. I am Christa Clelan. Names are how we identify each other, how we can call on one another; and God is no different. The Trinity gives God a name. The Trinity allows us to know who we are worshiping. We need to know who we are worshiping and so does the rest of the world

Today Jesus is sending us out in the NAME of that God. He says, "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." Jesus is asking you to walk out of this building and do something that most every Lutheran hates. Evangelize.

This is one of those tasks that we are given by the Lord that we tend to ignore. And for good reason: We don't want to bother people, be seen like the Mormons or Jehovah's Witnesses, and we certainly do not want to offend people

At our mid-week Fresh Air worship services we conducted a whole series about Evangelism and I shared this story to my congregation:

When I was in college I had this girl in my creative writing class who always had

the most beautiful shoes most of her creative writing steams from her love of shoes. (Now I can't hate on this girl because I LOVE my shoes too!) About half way through the semester we were to read paragraph of one of our favorite piece that we have written thus far to a partner. The shoe girl and I were paired together. She read a piece on why Jimmy Choo stilettos were more comfortable than Chloe stilettos. (She had a very convincing argument!) When it was my turn, I took the opportunity to evangelize, and I read her a piece that was about how my faith has shaped me. As I finished my story I could see her face tighten and she said to me "are you serious?" which at the time I said "yeah are you?" and she lectured me on how it is not appropriate to read or talk about one's faith. I could tell by the way she chastised me that I had seriously offended this girl and I became defensive and humiliated. All from a girl who fought tooth and nail about shoes! But I guess that is kind of my point. I could easily start a heated argument with most people in this room about local, state, or federal politics (Doesn't matter what side you fall on). Most people are willing to share their beliefs on abortion, capital punishment, Obama care, but faith.... That subject will stop people in their tracks. And the same fears that you might stop you in your tracks from evangelizing were more than likely the same fears the disciples were feeling. So why should we listen to this command from Jesus?

There are several reasons for us to not evangelize but there are several reasons as to why we should try and evangelize. I would say one of those reasons is that the world actually depends on it. Our world depends on us showing the love of God. You don't have to knock on people's doors and quote scripture to make a disciple, you have to believe that God who created this world, the Son who died for you, and the Holy Spirit who breathes the breath of life in you are the tools to guide you and lead you to make disciples. Look through the Bible. The people who evangelized were not people of great talent or knowledge they were not kings and queens. They were like you and I, given the same commandment by Jesus. Despite what fears you have or confusion about the Trinity leave this place and follow Jesus' command "go make disciples in the name of the Father, the Son, and Holy Spirit!"

TGBTG

Amen