

Three Things To Remember

Turn to the last chapter of the gospel of Matthew. This is another of the appearances Jesus makes after his resurrection and as he is preparing to ascend to the Father. This Thursday is Ascension day, the day Jesus ascended to heaven, forty days after Easter and ten days before Pentecost Sunday. We will talk about the importance of the Ascension next Sunday, but today I want to focus on what Jesus is telling his disciples. If someone is getting ready to leave and you know you won't see them again, you want to remember what they are telling you. So we need to listen to what Jesus has to say. **“Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. Then Jesus came to them and 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.’” Matthew 28:16-20**

We get some interesting information in this passage. We don't know which mountain but Jesus no doubt had some favorite spots, favorite views from the mountains that surround the Northern coastline of the Sea of Galilee. They knew exactly where he meant for them to go. Notice it speaks of the eleven but we don't know if only the eleven were there or if other followers of Jesus joined them. And then there is this rather intriguing statement, “When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted.” I believe it would be a natural response for these followers of Jesus to bow down and worship him at this point. They had spent the last three years trying to figure out just who he was. They finally decided he was the Messiah and then they spent time trying to figure out what that meant, then he died and rose again and appeared to them several times and that opened up a whole new realm of wonder and questions and joy and apparently even doubt. Some knew, without a doubt, he is the Son of God and he is worthy and deserving of worship. To worship means to bow toward, to kiss toward, to prostrate yourself before another. For these disciples, worship meant to lay everything they were and everything they had before Jesus and offer to him all glory and honor. It was their way of saying “I'm your servant and you are my Lord and my God and I will do whatever you ask of me. You died for me, rose again, you've saved me and given me life and I'm yours!” That's part of worship.

But some doubted. Doubted what? Did they doubt the resurrection? Doubt that he was the same Jesus they had been following? Was it some of the eleven that were doubting or were there other followers there as I suggested? And exactly what does it mean to doubt? The Greek word translated doubt here is only used a couple of times in the New Testament. It comes from the root word for two or twice. It means to have two minds, double-minded. The essence of doubt is to have a conflict in the mind. Maybe that's what is going on. They saw Jesus, but there is a conflict in their mind about what it all means, or perhaps a conflict about whether they can really worship him, really surrender to what he might ask or require of them. Some believed and worshiped and some doubted, some had a conflict in their mind about all of this.

It struck me as I read this passage that even among the disciples, there were believers and doubters, and Jesus would have known the difference, but he had grace for all of them. Grace for all! I'm thinking about what is happening in our country right now and the division I see. There are multiple opinions about everything and we aren't going to agree. As we move toward opening up the church to meet again, there are going to be all kinds of opinions about everything. If you are on social media then you know what I'm talking about with all the different theories. As we open the doors for services again there will be strong opinions. Some will continue to stay home a while longer out of caution and some are for opening everything up. Wear masks or don't wear masks, maintain social distancing or hug everyone around the neck. Some believe and some doubt, just like Matthew 28, but what I'm telling you is, there is grace for all. I'm asking you to love one another and to have grace for one another. I won't judge you for your position or your opinion and you don't judge me or condemn me for mine okay? Because if we are going to come to church to try to convince one another about the rightness or wrongness of our politics or our position or theory on this virus or how we should respond to it, we have missed what the church is all about. I'm coming to worship Jesus! I'm coming to celebrate Jesus! I'm coming to join with brothers and sisters and to encourage one another to love Jesus. If we stay focused on Jesus we will be okay. Can we agree to do that?

If you've ever eaten at Murphy's steakhouse in Bartlesville, you've probably had their hot hamburger with gravy over all. I'm going to borrow Murphy's motto and make a slight adjustment. Grace over all! As we open up we will be sharing guidelines for how we will gather and some of you will like them and some of you will think they are too much and some will

think they are not enough. Grace for all, okay? Grace for all. That's who we are as the body of Christ! People of his grace. I know I can count on you to show grace to one another!

Some believed and some doubted, but Jesus was unfazed by the doubts. Instead he tells them three things, three things they need to remember. Three things we need to remember as well. Jesus says, There's something I want you to know. Something I want you to do. Somewhere I want you to go.

There is something I want you to know. What is it? **“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.”** He wants us to know that he is Lord over all! His authority is not just a spiritual authority honored in heaven, but he has the final say on the earth as well. The apostle Paul says of Jesus that **“[God] raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, far above all rule and authority, power and dominion and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. And God placed all things under his feet...” Ephesians 1:20-21.** Jesus has authority over all things, including us, including the times and seasons in which we live. Take a deep breath. Relax. You don't have to live in fear knowing that ultimately, he is above all rule and power and dominion and all things are under his feet!

All authority in heaven and on earth means he has the authority to change the mission for his disciples and for us. He had spent three years preaching and teaching the Jewish people and now he changes the assignment and says, not only to the Jews, but I want you to take this message, this gospel of grace to the whole world. He has the authority to call people from all nations to come be his disciples and he delegates that authority to us, to go in his name and call people to come follow Jesus and be saved! He wants us to know about his authority.

He wants us to know about his abiding presence. It means security for us for he said, **“I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”** He is with us, in every situation. Jesus told the disciples earlier that he would send the Holy Spirit who would be with them and would dwell within them. We have his Holy Spirit abiding with us, leading, directing, comforting, empowering us. We aren't alone. I know we've been socially isolated, but you haven't been alone, not for one moment. He wants us to know that he is with us today and to the end of the age. Regardless of what happens or what comes along with the events of the end of time, Jesus will be with us. Matthew began his gospel by telling us Jesus was Immanuel, “God with us” and

he ends it by reminding us that Jesus is and will always be Immanuel, God with us! Remember what he wants us to know: he has all authority and he is always with us.

There is something I want you to do. “Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations...” We think of a disciple as someone in relationship to a teacher. They are learning from that person, following that person, desiring to imitate that person. That’s what we are called to be as disciples of Jesus. We are to learn all that he is teaching us, to follow him in obedience, wherever he leads us and whatever he asks of us, and we are living our life like him, valuing what he values, treating others as he treats others, asking and evaluating “what would Jesus do?” He wants us to be his disciples and then he wants us to go and make disciples.

The expectation was that we would go, we would want to share the good news, the gospel of Jesus and of his saving grace with the whole world. I think what he is saying is “Therefore, in light of the fact that I have all authority and I’m delegating that authority to you, have confidence and go everywhere and as you are going...this is what you are to do, this is how you are to go. Going, baptizing, teaching.

Going. Go where? Go where the fish are. Be wise and use the right bait or the right gage and size of net. If you are a fisherman, you aren’t fishing in Bass Pro’s parking lot, and, you aren’t going to the Oklahoma Aquarium to fish either. We need to go where the real fish are. Go where people don’t yet know about Jesus and his saving grace. The gospel right now is being preached to more people because of all the online services. Let’s keep getting the gospel to people, keep going. And let me encourage you personally, share the gospel. If you’re a follower of Jesus, light up Facebook with testimonies of God’s grace rather than conspiracy theories. We are children of light, not darkness. Let’s go and as we go, let your light shine for Jesus! We are to be making disciples of Jesus! That’s our number one calling. Stay focused on what Jesus told us to do. Remember what he said, remember our assignment and don’t get sidetracked by all this other stuff! Speak and live in such a way that others clearly see and hear Jesus in you. Then call them to come follow Jesus with you. Call them to become disciples of Jesus!

Baptizing. Not only are we to go and make disciples, to enlist followers of Jesus but we are to see to it they are baptized. That means we see to it they are connected to the church. Baptism is a public act, a declaration before the world of a new commitment to Christ, a public profession of faith in Jesus. Baptism says “I am a follower of Jesus, a disciple, one of his. I belong to him.” Baptism is an act too that unites us with the church, the body of Christ. Go and

proclaim the gospel, make disciples and see that they are baptized and connected to the church, the body of Christ. It was and is important that we recognize the importance of being connected to his body the church.

Teaching. This was his instruction: Go and make disciples, baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, connecting them to the church and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded. Notice we aren't to pick and choose what we are going to teach, but we are to teach everything he commanded. We are to be people of the book, doing what? Teaching and proclaiming and living according to the easy parts, according to the parts that accommodate a progressive, 2020 mentality and sexuality, according to the parts that fit best with a Western, Middle class, good old boy attitude and worldview? No, he was pretty clear about this wasn't he? **"Teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you."**

Instruct people in the activities and disciplines by which a disciple can grow in their relationship with Jesus. Teach them the word of God. Instruct people in the truth of God's word, how to read it, how to live by it. This book is alive! It will give light to your path if you will obey it. It will keep you from sin and from error and from a lot of heartbreak and trouble and regret if you will obey everything Jesus commanded.

There is something he wanted us to know, (about his authority and the security of his presence with us) something he wanted us to do (go, baptize and teach) and finally, Jesus said, **There is somewhere I want you to go.** He wants us to go into all the world, into all nations and make disciples. Oral Roberts told us that God was calling us to go into every person's world and make disciples. Everyone is called to go, to teach, to make plain the gospel. There are people in your world, in your sphere of influence, that only you can reach with the gospel. Take Jesus to your world! Use every means possible.

You saw the figures on the screen this morning from Tim and Lynley Hatcher. Great news at how many languages now have the word of God, but the challenge is how many languages still don't have the bible in their language! The status quo of the church won't work! I looked at the world population figures in my lifetime. 1950, five years before I was born, the world population was 2.5 billion. Now, in 2020 we are at 7.5 billion. The population has tripled in my lifetime and continues to grow, but that means more people on the planet that don't know Jesus, that have never heard. The church can't afford to just maintain the status quo, trying to keep our heads above water. We are hurrying to get back in our building. Maybe Jesus was

letting some of this happen to get us out of the building and out into the neighborhood and out into our world once again! There is somewhere he wants us to go. I'll tell you, I think there is something he is wanting to say to us and I'm not sure we've heard it yet. He is trying to get our attention and we keep deflecting and turning the message into something else. Listen to me, this pandemic is not some kind of political wake up call about American politics. God is trying to speak to the world and to the church, worldwide and we need to keep listening because I don't think we've heard all he has to say just yet! Please, please, let's make this about Jesus. Point people to Jesus. Talk about Jesus. Lead people to Jesus. Testify that Jesus is the answer, the way, the truth and the life. He is the only hope. Keep pointing people to Jesus!

Jesus has somewhere he wants us to go. He said in Acts 1 that they would be endowed with power and then they were to go into all the world. He said you'll be my witnesses, first in Jerusalem, then Judea, then Samaria, then to the uttermost parts of the earth. Be witnesses in Jerusalem, the place of their biggest failure, where they had all fled from Jesus. Go to that place where you messed up and dare to proclaim Jesus again.

Go to Judea, a place that is beyond hot in the summer and cold in the winter. Don't just go to the easy place, go to the hard places, remote places, difficult places. Go to Judea.

Go to Samaria, a place where Jews did not go, a place where Jews were not wanted or welcome. Go beyond your comfort zone, beyond your own little crowd, your own people. And then go to the uttermost ends of the earth. Take Jesus to your world! Go, baptize, connect people to Jesus and to the church, teach them what his word says and how to live for him!

Three things we need to remember. There is something Jesus wants us to know. There is something he wants us to do. There is somewhere he wants us to go. It's urgent. It's important. Someone's eternal destiny depends on it! Would you say yes to Jesus today? Would you listen to him? What is he saying to you? What is he asking you to do? Where is he asking you to go? Say yes to him today!

“May the Lord bless you and keep you, May the Lord make his face shine upon you and be gracious to you, the Lord lift up his countenance upon and give you peace.”