

A Note from Pastor's Desk

Matthew 28:18-20 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.

This mandate from Jesus given to his disciples takes on a renewed meaning for our time and context. As we moved into this 2025 year of our Lord, many have questions. What will the future hold for us? Will we be able to maintain the lifestyle we are currently living or move up in the world? Will we be asked to sacrifice more? All valid questions and yet perhaps not the most important question.

Jesus comes with authority and commands us to make "disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit." And while "we are making disciples of all nations... we are to teach everything that God has commanded of us." Lastly but most importantly Jesus tells us "I am with you always, to the end of the age." Could the most important question be "Who are these nations we are to make into disciples?" Additionally, once we have made them into disciples, we are to teach them everything we know. I do not know about you, but this command is daunting.

1. Who is or what is the nation for which Jesus is referring to?
2. How am I to help them become disciples of Jesus?
3. And then weirdly, Jesus says, "I am with you until the end of the ages?" How can this be?

As followers of Christ, we have been made Christ's disciples through our Baptisms. This means we are united into Jesus' suffering, death, resurrection, and ascension. There is no thing in heaven and earth that will keep us from God's love and redemptive (the forgiveness of sins) grace.

Add to this formula the Triune God whom we worship, created all things; yes, us too. "And God said, it was good." The trouble within this created world/earth is we no longer fully believe God is the only one true God. We allow many and various worldly things distract us from this truth, and so God calls us to withstand its power (The truth is not in us...Confession of Sins). The truth is exactly what we think...it is Jesus Christ, the Messiah. Jesus who saves us from our enemies even when the enemy is sometimes us. All of this may seem quite clear but how does that help us know who is this nation that Jesus is sending us to make disciples? For me, the answer is right before me, it is my neighbor. It is all who belong to this created world that God made. What makes it a nation is not boundary lines, country lines, gender lines, religious differences, or anything we may think makes us dissimilar. For the very thing we see as different God, sees as unity in diversity. We all have gifts that are needed to make us one with God. Therefore, when Jesus commands to make disciples of every nation, it is go make disciples in this diversity. It is "Love one another as I first loved you. Love your neighbor as yourself."

How then is it that we can make disciples of nations of diverse people? We follow Jesus' example of walking, listening talking, and sharing meals. In this way, we open our own hard hearts to the truth...God made us all and we all are united despite our diversity. We learn that it is precisely our diversity that holds us together as we all bring a necessary gift to our lives for living. Once recognized by us and our neighbors, we begin to be the disciples God created us to be...God lovers. It is no longer about what my needs are but what the needs of my neighbors. When we learn this lesson, we find freedom. The freedom that keeps us from looking only at ourselves and missing the grace poured out for all of us.

When Jesus says he will be with us until the end of the age... we receive the best grace gift of all. We receive faith that tells us we are loved and forgiven. We belong. We are not forgotten. We have a home.

With all this power we are free to do the work of the Spirit. We can proclaim the good news through our faithful acts of love for one another. Please watch and participate in the life of Christ through all the ministries God sets before us. One single person cannot accomplish what the body of Christ is able to do. Your diversity is needed. Your voice is needed. Your love of God is needed. We are simply not enough when we are alone. Join us in God's work, assisting in bringing God's kingdom to the world. Come as you are.

Peace,

Pastor Christi