

Denice Leslie
May 18, 2008
Trinity Sunday A
Matthew 28: 16 – 20

“Go And Make Disciples”



“A minister decided that a visual demonstration would add emphasis to his Sunday sermon.

He placed four worms into four separate jars.

The first worm he put into a container of alcohol. The second worm he put into a container of cigarette smoke. The third worm he put into a container of chocolate syrup. And the fourth worm he put into a container of good clean soil.

At the conclusion of the sermon, the Minister reported the following results:

The first worm in alcohol - Dead.

The second worm in cigarette smoke - Dead

Third worm in chocolate syrup - Dead

Fourth worm in good clean soil - Alive.

So the Minister asked the congregation -
What can you learn from this demonstration?



Maxine, a regular parishioner sitting in the back, quickly raised her hand and said,

‘As long as you drink, smoke and eat chocolate, you won’t have worms!’¹

Those poor worms! Death by chocolate would have been my choice.

They say a picture is worth a thousand words! We preachers are always looking for ways to make things clear. But I don’t know that anyone has tried using worms to explain the Trinity.

However, even a great demonstration has to have some context provided or you end up with folks supplying their own like Maxine—logical but wrong.

In other words, folks aren’t likely to get what you’re driving at unless you take time to explain it to them....so demonstrations for complex ideas can get a bit circular.

Rather than focus solely on a concept which is a very abstract kind of “what’s this got to do with my life” approach, Jesus is much more practical and down to earth.

¹ Thanks to Crystal Babcock for sending this one on the internet. Source unknown.



When we baptize, we pour water on the candidate's head three times, each time with these three references to God in this order:

"In the name of the Father,
and of the Son,
and of the Holy Spirit."

Then we lay on hands on the person and say, "The Holy Spirit work within you that being born through water and the Spirit, you may be a faithful disciple of Jesus Christ."

After the laying on of hands we anoint the person with oil and say, "You are marked by the power of the Holy Spirit and sealed as Christ's own forever."

The final act is to present the baptized with a lit candle and say, "May your light so shine before others, that seeing your good works, they may give glory to God."

Do you see how Baptism is about God at work in our lives in these three God ways to bring us to discipleship?

Do you see how the full presence , power and work of God are represented in each of these actions?

In today's gospel he gives us clear instructions, "Go and **make disciples** of all nations. And then he tells us how to do it. He says, you do it by "**baptizing** them in the name of the Father, the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and **teaching** them to **obey** everything I have commanded you."

Make disciples:

Baptize

Teach

Obey

And do it, Jesus commands us, in the name of God who you know as "Father"

- another way of saying "the author of life or parent of us all,"

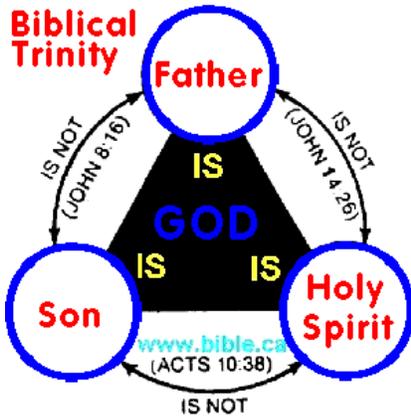
as Son:

- or as you have experienced in me God's best of what is human

and as Holy Spirit:

- my continuing activity in you, in the church and in the world.

We see the Trinity at work in baptism. Think of baptism as the first step into the apprenticeship of being a disciple.



The trinity is not a concept, it's a tool box—God as a set of tools whose purpose is 'to go out and re-create people in God's image who in turn live out the ministry of Jesus through God's active guidance to bring others into lives of discipleship.

This is the work of the church: to use this tool box of God to make disciples. To shape people into God's intention for humanity. To help them live as Jesus lived.

Unfortunately, most of us today have "confused the running of the church with the Church's ministry.

This is like confusing housework with the purpose of a family. The first is important and necessary but its not the main act or reason for being."²

That being said, I know I'm as guilty as anyone of spending enormous amounts of time on the stuff of life rather than on the relationships of life. And my life and the lives of those I care about are the poorer for it.

The same is true when we as the Church fail in our main purpose. When we spend more time on the stuff of doing church rather than on being the Church. The world and the lives of those in the world are the poorer for our pre-occupation.

The church is the utility truck for God's work in the world. It holds the tools and we are

² I stole this idea from something someplace and I don't recall from who or where etc. May have been "Blessed to be a Blessing" chapter.

the men and women in the service pro uniforms. The world may or may not call us when it needs things to be put back together—but in fact we don't wait for a service call—we KNOW the world needs putting back together because God in Jesus has given us our service call.

We have come to call his com-mandment to make disciples, "The Great Commission." Trouble is these grand words are a little like the words you put on a recognition plaque—we read them and admire them and enshrine them and forget them.

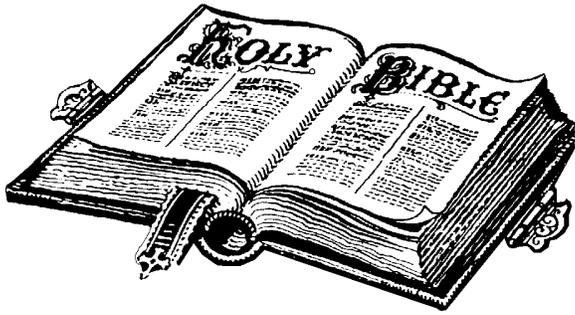


Perhaps they should say, "The Great Service Call" and be printed on a flashing oscillating light on the roof of the church or on our crosses or steeples—so we can't fail to remember and respond appropriately.

You see as we've become a huge institution we've been about building buildings, organizing committees and maintaining a burgeoning organization—we've been about managing ministry more than doing ministry. We've stepped back from hands on—not intentionally—we just kind of got stuck. Meantime society changed and we like Rip Van Winkle are just awakening to that fact.

Unfortunately we long time Christians have passed this idea that a church is a building on to other new Christians. What God wants is not a building. God wants us to build a people—an army—a community—a world. And that takes resource: Leadership in competent clergy, leadership in trained and committed members, and prayer, study and delving into scripture. I've

said it before but in case we've forgotten, here is our service manual,



(hold up the bible. We have our marching orders. We are after all like an army with a mission—a mission made possible through the power of God.

The Salvation Army spun off of the Methodist movement in the 1800's once we Methodists became more sedentary and less of a movement.

And of course today the S.A. is also a church, an institution, a huge organization and no longer much of a movement. But I do have to say they have something going for them in that every member of the army is IN THE ARMY of Jesus Christ.

Its not just a metaphor.

But you know what, we have what we need: we have God at work in our lives. We have Jesus' commandment to go and make disciples. It couldn't be any plainer than the nose on our faces. We simply need to be about our mission.

At Memorial we express our mission this way, "*Show and tell Jesus' love everywhere.*" I wonder, does our community know this about us? Do you tell your friends this is who we are? Do our children know our mission?

Let us make this our way of expressing Jesus' Great Commission. Let us be known among ourselves and beyond our doors as the "*Show and tell*" church—showing and telling Jesus love as we bring people to Christ.

To conclude this morning's sermon, lets stand and sing a great and rousing hymn of faith that says it with so much more inspiration: "Onward, Christian Soldiers."