
DECISIONS WE MAKE REGARDING LIFE CAN MAKE A HUGE DIFFERENCE IN WHAT HAPPENS IN OUR LIFE**Sermon for Trinity Sunday 2020****Matthew 28:16-20**

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is our Gospel read before, Matthew 28:16-20: ¹⁶ **The eleven disciples went to the mountain in Galilee where Jesus had told them to go.** ¹⁷ **When they saw Him, they worshipped Him; but some doubted.**

¹⁸ **When Jesus came near, He spoke to them. He said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Me.** ¹⁹ **Go, therefore, and make disciples of all the nations by baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit** ²⁰ **and by teaching them to keep all that I have commanded you! Certainly, I am with you always, until the end of the age.”**

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth, Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

If you had a time machine, would you go back in history and change some of the decisions you have made in life? I am sure we have all made decisions we have lived to regret, sometimes wishing that *we could indeed go back* and change things.

Some decisions we make can have a significant impact on our lives, and so some decisions shouldn't be rushed. Perhaps this is more so when we are young and are getting out into the world as young adults. All sorts of decisions need to be made that can have a considerable bearing on our lives. Do I take up this job or that? Do I keep furthering my education? Do I find a partner and settle down to married life with children? And so it goes. But no matter what, decisions we make regarding life can make a huge difference in what happens in our life.

That was certainly true for Jesus' earthly life. How He began as a human being made a huge difference in what happened in His life. He didn't begin on His own, but with the unity and activity of the whole Godhead: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Jesus is the Son right from conception. He is conceived by the Holy Spirit, and the Father sends His Son to us.

That same triune God that was working together at His incarnation continues to do so throughout His life. Jesus began His public ministry at His baptism. What happened? Saint Matthew records, *“When Jesus had been baptised, He immediately came up from the water. At that moment the heavens were opened to Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming on Him.* ¹⁷ *Suddenly a voice came from heaven saying, “This is My Son, whom I love and in whom I am well pleased”* (Matthew 3:16-17). Jesus' baptism identified Him with the world of sinners. Paul describes Christ's substitution for sinners by telling us, *“God made Him who did not know sin to be sin for us, that in Him we might become the righteousness of God”* (2 Corinthians 5:21). He indeed placed His stamp of approval on John's baptism and indicated that He also wants us to receive the blessings of baptism. Jesus' baptism and the testimony of the Father and the Holy Spirit publicly identified Jesus as the Lamb of God, who had come to take away the sin of the world. Jesus began His mission of salvation together with the Father and Holy Spirit, who were all active in completing our salvation.

We also see Jesus regularly in prayer with His Father, and the Spirit is with Him every step of the way.

Then come the final days of His life. Now on the cross, Jesus is alone. Even His Father has abandoned Him as He goes through hell for us. But you can see the Father even in that abject loneliness and suffering - Jesus is carrying out His Father's will by going to the cross. On Easter morning, the Father raises Him from the dead. Later, when Jesus ascends into heaven, He sends His Holy Spirit into the Church.

Now that we have seen how Jesus began, continued, and ended His earthly life in the unity of all persons of the Trinity, surely we must be struck by just how the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are all working together on our behalf. Read through the Bible, and you will not find any hint of jealousy, resentment, anger, bitterness, or strife in the

Trinity. The three persons are wonderfully and mysteriously one God, who, from beginning to end, has been beautifully united in action for us. But how Jesus began His earthly life made a huge difference in what happened in His life.

The same is true for our lives. How we start makes a huge difference. And for us in the Church, the Triune God is our starting place. We begin by being baptised into **the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.** What difference does that make?

First, beginning with baptism makes a huge difference in how we see the world in which we live. The earth, stars, animals, plants, and the universe are not just nature or an endless product of evolution, but all are fearfully and wonderfully made by God. Often, we think of God the Father as the Creator of heaven and earth. After all, we learn to confess in the First Article of the Creed, “*I believe in God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth.*” But while this is true, it is important to recognise all three, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit had a hand in creation. The Scriptures begin with “*In the beginning, God created...*” (Gen. 1:1). The Spirit of God hovered over the waters (Gen. 1:2), while John tells us that Jesus, the Word, was in the beginning with God and was God and that everything was made through Him.¹

We also believe that the Triune God still cares for His creation. He doesn’t watch from a distance but keeps and protects it. For sure, we see wars and natural disasters, pollution and a dying earth, diseases and pandemics, hatred and violence that make us doubt. Perhaps we are like those disciples with Jesus in our text who, “**when they saw Him, they worshipped Him; but some doubted.**” It is not that they doubted the resurrection – Jesus had appeared bodily to them after His resurrection.² Perhaps it was more a matter of confusion over what to make of it all. Jesus kept appearing and disappearing without any warning. They never knew for sure when or if they would see Him again. Nor did they feel confident that they knew what Jesus wanted them to do now. Where did they fit into Jesus’ plans for the future? So too us. Where do we fit in Jesus’ plan? When we see bad things happening around us, perhaps we are prone to doubt.

All the bad stuff happening is the result of sin. Mankind’s turning away from the Triune God has resulted in chaos and ultimately death for all living things. Nothing has been spared - all of creation has been groaning and labouring with birth-pangs.³ But instead of dwelling on the bad, think of the good, especially being baptised into the name of the Triune God. Trusting in Him, we believe that a tree bearing fruit is a gift from God, so we have something to eat. We believe that a firefighter is given by God to help keep danger at bay. We believe that the medicine we buy from a pharmacy is given by God through the wonderful minds who do research and study this incredible creation. In fact, food and drink, house and home, work and country, rest and school are all gifts from God for us to live our lives under His gracious care.

Second, beginning in the Trinity at Baptism makes a huge difference in our relationship with God. It’s all grace. It’s all a free gift. How do we begin a worship service? We begin by being reminded of our baptism. Remember? We begin “**In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.**” We then go on to confess that we are poor, miserable sinners. We confess that we deserve only temporal and eternal punishment. We know we have sinned against God and each other by thought, word, and deed, and so, confessing our sins, we receive the free forgiveness that Jesus has won for us.

Jesus has come to be our Saviour: not to be *oohed* and *aahed* to, but to cry out in agony on a cross. He did not come only to be born in a manger but also to be placed in a tomb. He did not come with a star to guide the Wise Men, but also with an early morning rising sun as He rose from the dead. With all that Jesus has accomplished, we are forgiven. In the mercy of almighty God, Jesus Christ was given to die and rise for us. For His sake, God forgives us all our sin. He has given us the privilege of becoming His children. Through the work of the Holy Spirit, our baptism places us into God’s loving and forgiving hands right from the very start of our lives.

No wonder that Jesus says “**Go, therefore, and make disciples of all the nations.**” We are to go and tell others what Jesus has done for us. We are to go and bring others to Jesus so He can give to them what we have received: that loving and forgiven relationship with God. We are to baptise **them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of**

¹ John 1:1-3, also Hebrews 1:2

² Luke 24:36-49; John 20:19-29

³ Romans 8:22

the Holy Spirit. We are to go with His name upon us as we leave here today and move out into our vocations, witnessing to others through our words and our actions.

We believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord. We go, make disciples, teach, and baptise, all because what Jesus has done for us makes all the difference in our relationship with the Triune God. When you begin with baptism into the name of the Triune God, it makes a huge difference in your life.

Finally, it makes a huge difference in the kind of people we become. We believe the Holy Spirit has brought us together into the Church to become different people, people who listen to what Jesus says and become His disciples in this troubled world, people who want to do what is right and good and helpful.

You see, when you begin with baptism, it makes a huge difference in the people we become. The Holy Spirit brings us together to support, encourage, teach, and build each other up. All because the Holy Spirit gathers us together in the name of the Triune God.

Today is Holy Trinity Sunday, and I can think of no better way to celebrate this Church festival than by us thanking our Triune God for getting us off to a great start. In the waters of baptism, we began our lives of faith in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. When we begin like that, it really does make a huge difference in our lives. Amen.

The peace of God which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.

PRAYER FOR TRINITY SUNDAY

We praise You, O God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, for You are from everlasting to everlasting. We adore You as the Lord of all, clothed with majesty and honour. We sing Your praise, and humbly bring You our prayers.

We thank You for the truth by which we have come to know You, and for the mercy by which we have come to love You. We thank You for the ability and privilege to praise You, the one, true, eternal, immortal, invisible God in whom we live, move, and exist.

We bless You, heavenly Father, that the universe that you have made is good and wonderful, and that the things that You have made reveal Your power and wisdom.

We worship You, O Christ, only Son of the Father. For when You were lifted up on the cross You drew all people to Yourself, so that whoever believes in You might not die, but have eternal life. We praise You that, at the right hand of the Father, You govern all things for the benefit of Your church. Continue to intercede with the Father for us, Your people.

We praise You, O Holy Spirit that You have called us by the Gospel, and have led us to the saving truth of Jesus the Son. We praise You for gathering us into Your church and making us holy by Your grace. We thank You for making us alive in Christ by Baptism and faith, and for renewing our hearts and lives.

Gracious God, continue to open to us Your Holy Scriptures, that we may grow in our understanding of Your will, serve You more acceptably, and love and obey You better. Give us an ever clearer view of Jesus our Saviour, so that we may rejoice in Your love and mercy more and more, and always trust You completely for everything.

Live in Your Church, O Lord, and make people and pastors eager to fulfil their roles in Your kingdom. Cleanse Your church from all error, weakness, strife, and disobedience. Make us strong in faith and good works, and give us a strong hope in all Your rich promises.

Loving Lord, You have made us Your own; keep us close to You all our days. Give us unceasing joy in Christ's forgiveness and salvation, and confirm us in the new life of the Spirit, until that day dawns, when Your kingdom will come in all its fullness.

Then grant that we may see You face to face, and perfectly love and praise You, our gracious God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in the ages to come. Amen.

FIRST SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST (HOLY TRINITY)

Genesis 1:1-2:4a

¹ In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. ² The earth was formless and empty, darkness covered the surface of the deep and the Spirit of God was hovering over the surface of the water. ³ God said, "Let there be light!" And there was light. ⁴ God saw that the light was good. God separated the light from the darkness. ⁵ God named the light "day" and named the darkness "night." There was evening and there was morning, the first day.

⁶ God said, "Let there be an expanse between the waters to separate water from water!"

⁷ So, God made the expanse and separated the water below the expanse from the water above it. It was so. ⁸ God named the expanse "sky." There was evening and there was morning, the second day.

⁹ God said, "Let the water under the sky be gathered to one place and let the dry land appear!"

It was so. ¹⁰ God named the dry land "earth," and named the gathered water "seas." God saw that it was good.

¹¹ God said, "Let the earth sprout vegetation: plants bearing seeds and fruit trees bearing fruit with seeds in it, each according to its kind!"

It was so. ¹² The earth produced vegetation: plants bearing seeds according to their own kinds and trees bearing fruit with seeds in it each according to its kind. God saw that it was good. ¹³ There was evening and there was morning, the third day.

¹⁴ God said, "Let there be lights in the expanse of the sky to separate the day from the night! Let them serve as signs to mark feasts, days and years, ¹⁵ and let them be lights in the expanse of the sky to give light on the earth!"

It was so. ¹⁶ God made the two great lights, the greater light to govern the day and the smaller light to govern the night. He also made the stars. ¹⁷ God set them in the expanse of the sky to give light on the earth, ¹⁸ to govern the day and the night and to separate the light from the darkness. God saw that it was good. ¹⁹ There was evening and there was morning, the fourth day.

²⁰ God said, "Let the water teem with living creatures and let flying creatures fly above the earth across the expanse of the sky!"

²¹ Therefore, God created the large sea creatures, every living and moving thing with which the water teems, according to their kinds and every winged creature according to its kind. God saw that they were good. ²² God blessed them and said: "Be fruitful and

increase in number and fill the water in the seas; and let there be many flying creatures on the earth!"

²³ There was evening and there was morning, the fifth day.

²⁴ God said, "Let the earth bring forth living creatures according to their kinds: domestic animals, crawling animals and wild animals according to their kinds!"

It was so. ²⁵ God made the wild animals according to their kinds, the domestic animals according to their kinds and every animal that crawls on the ground according to its kind. God saw that it was good.

²⁶ God said: "Let Us make man in Our image, in Our likeness and let them rule over the fish in the sea, over the flying creatures in the sky, over the domestic animals and over every kind of animal that crawls on the earth!"

²⁷ So, God created man in His own image. He created them in God's image. He created them male and female.

²⁸ God blessed them and told them: "Be fruitful and increase in number, fill the earth and bring it under your control! Rule over the fish in the sea, the flying creatures in the sky and over every kind of animal that crawls on the earth.

²⁹ God said: "Look! I have given you every seed-bearing plant on the face of all the earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food. ³⁰ I have also given every green plant as food to every wild animal, to every flying creature in the sky and to every animal that crawls on the ground, to everything that has the breath of life." It was so. ³¹ God saw all that He had made and, indeed, it was very good. There was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.

^{2:1} Thus the heavens and the earth were completed in their entire vast array. ² By the seventh day God had completed the work that He had been doing. Then, on the seventh day, He rested from all His work, which He had done. ³ Therefore, God has blessed the seventh day and has set it apart as holy, because on that day He rested from all the work of creation that He had done.

^{4a} This is the account of the origin of the heavens and the earth.

Acts 2:14a, 22-26

¹⁴ Then Peter stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice and addressed them: ... ²² "Men of Israel, listen to these words! Jesus of Nazareth was a Man whom God commended to you, as you yourselves know, by miracles, wonders and miraculous signs, which God worked among you through Him. ²³ This Man was

handed over to you by God's set plan and foreknowledge, and you, with the hands of wicked men, nailed Him to a cross and put Him to death. ²⁴ Nevertheless, God raised Him and loosed the pains of death, because it was not possible for death to hold Him. ²⁵ For David says about Him: 'I have continually been foreseeing the Lord before Me. For He is at My right hand, that I may not be shaken. ²⁶ For this reason My heart is glad, and My tongue rejoices; yes, even My body will rest in hope.

Matthew 28:16-20

¹⁶ The eleven disciples went to the mountain in Galilee where Jesus had told them to go. ¹⁷ When they saw Him, they worshipped Him; but some doubted.

¹⁸ When Jesus came near, He spoke to them. He said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Me. ¹⁹ Go, therefore, and make disciples of all the nations by baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit ²⁰ and by teaching them to keep all that I have commanded you! Certainly, I am with you always, until the end of the age."