

Dear Friends in Christ,

Did you know that Shepherd of the Valley started out as a mission congregation of the Wisconsin Synod? Members of our churches in the area saw that the Surprise and Sun City West area was growing. The local mission board, which helps start churches, was petitioned to provide leadership and money. They did and outreach and Bible classes were started.

Around that time a mission statement was drawn up by the new group. Do you know what it is? It is: *Shepherd of the Valley exists to proclaim the Good News of Salvation in Christ. Our goals are to strengthen God's flock, through Word and Sacrament. As His ambassadors, we are to reach out to those who do not know the Savior, (The Good Shepherd).*

Notice our work is to strengthen God's flock and to reach out to those who don't know Jesus. This is a fine mission statement and it is something we keep in mind as we work and plan for the future at SotV. Jesus also give us a mission statement in Matthew 28.

It was after Easter and Jesus and his disciples had retreated to Galilee. It was a time to finish their instruction and training.

Apparently, some of the disciples had doubts and did not know what to make of Jesus. The apostles had seen Jesus earlier, after his resurrection, so it doesn't seem likely that they were struggling with doubts. There were other disciples who may not have seen Jesus after Easter. 1 Corinthians 15 tells us that Jesus appeared to five hundred people at once. This is likely at the Galilean retreat. Here, some of them see him for the first time. They wondered if it was really him or they were seeing something like a vision. During this re-treat these disciples had time to see that it was really Jesus and the doubts disappeared.

Whatever the case, there are no doubts about the mission work that Jesus gave his disciples to do. In verse 18-20, Jesus makes very clear their mission. He also informs them that they would have the support of the Trinity, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. As a result there is **No Doubting Our Christian Mission**. We have: authority, assignment and assurance.

1. Authority (the Father)

In the book of Acts we are told that Saul, the Pharisee, went up to Damascus with authority from the Sanhedrin to arrest Christians. (Acts 26:10) Most Jewish people in the first century believed that real church authority came from Jerusalem.

Jesus states in verse 18 that all authority resides with him. We need to understand this authority because he shares it with his disciples.

A. Jesus explains, **“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.”**

1. The word “authority” pictures a person owning possessions. If a person owns something, normally that means you control it. Examples would be your house, your car, your money, etc.

2. What does Jesus own? He tells us heaven and earth. That is his way of saying, *“I own everything and therefore I control everything. It is all under my power.”*

God made everything. St. John tells us that, Son of God participated in creation. (John 1) Jesus, according to human nature rules all things as the Apostle Paul tells us, **“And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church.”** (Ephesians 1:22)

Jesus will share that authority with his disciples in verse 19. Before we look at that let’s consider what is the most important use of Jesus’ authority.

B. The disciples would do many things in the years ahead. They would cast out demons and even raise the dead. While Jesus tells them that they will work miracles by his authority, it is not their most important work.

1. The most important thing they will do is forgive sins. Jesus already had told them this at Easter. **“Jesus said, ‘Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.’ And with that he breathed on them and said, ‘Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive anyone’s sins, their sins are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven.’”** (John 20:21-23)

2. Proclaiming forgiveness is at the heart of their ministry. What good is it if they heal someone and they are not forgiven? What good is it if they raise a dead person, but he or she is not forgiven? In both cases the person will end up in hell. The most important part of Jesus’ authority is to tell a miserable sinner that their sins are forgiven. He wants his disciples to proclaim this.

C. This says something about what is at the heart of our ministry. We can give food to the food bank, we can volunteer our time to help others.

However, in our public and private ministry the most important and urgent thing we will ever do is to share forgiveness of sins in Jesus. We don't want to lose sight of this.

2. Assignment (the Son)

I said Jesus would share his authority with his disciples. He gives an assignment in the form of a command in verses 19 & 20. **“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.”**

A. We are to make **“disciples.”** *“Disciple”* means *“learner.”* Jesus wants people to know him and follow him.

1. Someone might question, “Can we ‘make’ disciples?” There is a two part answer. One, is that we cannot make disciples on our own or by our own power, only God can make a sinful heart right. However, since Jesus has allowed us to bring the powerful of the Gospel to people, we are helping to change people's lives and to change our world. Disciples are made when people repent of their sins and they trust in Jesus as their only Savior. The word that we share accomplishes this.

2. It is good to notice the word **“go.”** Jesus wanted his disciples to start at home and work their way out into the world. Salvation is for all. Today the WELS has Home Missions and World Missions. We have programs of bringing the Gospel to people in our country and to countries all over the world. We show the *WELS Connection* to update you on this work. There is *Forward in Christ* magazine and other newsletters. The *Lutheran Women's Missionary Society* and other groups meet to hear reports and to support the mission work we do.

B. Jesus also commands us to teach **“everything** that he has commanded.” Some teachings are easier to accept than others. Sometimes we do not want obey Jesus' teachings. **“Teaching everything”** means sticking to what the Bible teaches and calling people to repent when they don't obey Jesus' teachings. We also announce forgiveness to the repentant. That forgiveness will motivate them work at obeying all of Jesus teachings.

C. One command that you and I break is the command to go and make disciples. We are lazy so we don't try or we don't bring offerings to support the work. We don't want to embarrass ourselves in front of the neighbors so we don't say anything. We judge some people to be unworthy, so we ignore

them. Otherwise, we try to bring people in by our own charm or persuasiveness. We must repent of our selfishness and self-centeredness. Good news! You and I are forgiven! Jesus paid for our sins at the cross.

We can rededicate ourselves to doing the work which is proclaiming or helping others to proclaim the gospel. Our forgiveness motivates us to bring forgiveness to others.

3. Assurance (the Spirit)

Jesus wraps up his command with an assurance.

A. **“And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”** Jesus would soon ascend into heaven. They would not see him, but he promises he will be present invisibly. Jesus sees us every moment of the day and is watching over us. This should encourage us to serve Jesus and to be his witnesses.

We also need to remember how he communicates with us.

B. The Holy Spirit reminds us of his words. Jesus told his disciples, **“But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.”** (John 14:26) Are you feeling alone when you witness your faith? Are you feeling like you don't know where to go and what to do? Go to the Word. There the Holy Spirit reminds you and me of what Jesus says. There we are able to carry out his commands.

C. I remember it was about 12 years ago that Shepherd of the Valley had ministry plans, but we were short on offerings by a significant amount. There was a question of how things were going to go. We noted that God says in his word that he would provide for ministry. We prayed. I believe within 6 months things were better. We continued to go bring the Gospel to Surprise.

We have questions today about this situation or that challenge. We do the same things. We turn to the Lord's word for assurance and we pray for direction. The Lord is faithful to his promise here in Matthew 28. We can count on his help in the future.

Conclusion: I mentioned to someone, *“We are a church and we are a mission congregation.”* The person said, “Oh, I didn't know that.” I hope you know that. Jesus has given us a mission statement. We are to make disciples and teach people all of God's word. It is so they have forgiveness and salvation. Someone brought the Gospel to us. Now it is our turn. Our powerful Jesus promises to help us. Amen.

History of SotV blessings (70 in BC from Jan to Mar)...VBS this past week. We are not the only church. We have a mission and there is no doubt that the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are helping us. We go and carry out that mission. Amen.

Context: Jesus is with his disciples in Galilee teaching them before he ascends into heaven. He speaks to them concerning the work that he is giving them to do which is to make disciples through the Gospel.

Malady: Human nature can doubt and question what he is like post resurrection and where he is. There is no doubt about the mission he has given to his disciples.

Propositional Statement: It is clear from Jesus' words what our mission it is to baptize and teach concerning the forgiveness of sins in Christ.

First Lesson – Genesis 1-2:3

(NIV 2011)

1 In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. 2 Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters.

3 And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. 4 God saw that the light was good, and he separated the light from the darkness. 5 God called the light "day," and the darkness he called "night." And there was evening, and there was morning—the first day.

6 And God said, "Let there be a vault between the waters to separate water from water." 7 So God made the vault and separated the water under the vault from the water above it. And it was so. 8 God called the vault "sky." And there was evening, and there was morning—the second day.

9 And God said, "Let the water under the sky be gathered to one place, and let dry ground appear." And it was so. 10 God called the dry ground "land," and the gathered waters he called "seas." And God saw that it was good.

11 Then God said, "Let the land produce vegetation: seed-bearing plants and trees on the land that bear fruit with seed in it, according to their various kinds." And it was so. 12 The land produced vegetation: plants bearing seed according to their kinds and trees bearing fruit with seed in it according to their kinds. And God saw that it was good. 13 And there was evening, and there was morning—the third day.

14 And God said, "Let there be lights in the vault of the sky to separate the day from the night, and let them serve as signs to mark sacred times, and days and years, 15 and let them be lights in the vault of the sky to give light on the earth." And it was so. 16 God made two great lights—the greater light to govern the day and the lesser light to govern the night. He also made the stars. 17

God set them in the vault of the sky to give light on the earth, 18 to govern the day and the night, and to separate light from darkness. And God saw that it was good. 19 And there was evening, and there was morning—the fourth day.

20 And God said, “Let the water teem with living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the vault of the sky.” 21 So God created the great creatures of the sea and every living thing with which the water teems and that moves about in it, according to their kinds, and every winged bird according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. 22 God blessed them and said, “Be fruitful and increase in number and fill the water in the seas, and let the birds increase on the earth.” 23 And there was evening, and there was morning—the fifth day.

24 And God said, “Let the land produce living creatures according to their kinds: the livestock, the creatures that move along the ground, and the wild animals, each according to its kind.” And it was so. 25 God made the wild animals according to their kinds, the livestock according to their kinds, and all the creatures that move along the ground according to their kinds. And God saw that it was good.

26 Then God said, “Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.”

27 So God created mankind in his own image,
in the image of God he created them;
male and female he created them.

28 God blessed them and said to them, “Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground.”

29 Then God said, “I give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food. 30 And to all the beasts of the earth and all the birds in the sky and all the creatures that move along the ground—everything that has the breath of life in it—I give every green plant for food.” And it was so.

31 God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. And there was evening, and there was morning—the sixth day.

2:1 Thus the heavens and the earth were completed in all their vast array.

2 By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing; so on the seventh day he rested from all his work. 3 Then God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done.

(NIV 1984)

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. 2 Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters.

3 And God said, “Let there be light,” and there was light. 4 God saw that the light was good, and he separated the light from the darkness. 5 God called the light “day,” and the darkness he called “night.” And there was evening, and there was morning—the first day.

6 And 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 under the expanse from the water above it. And it was so. 8 God called the expanse “sky.” And there was evening, and there was morning—the second day.

9 And God said, “Let the water under the sky be gathered to one place, and let dry ground appear.” And it was so. 10 God called the dry ground “land,” and the gathered waters he called “seas.” And God saw that it was good.

11 Then God said, “Let the land produce vegetation: seed-bearing plants and trees on the land that bear fruit with seed in it, according to their various kinds.” And it was so. 12 The land produced vegetation: plants bearing seed according to their kinds and trees bearing fruit with seed in it according to their kinds. And God saw that it was good. 13 And there was evening, and there was morning—the third day.

14 And God said, “Let there be lights in the expanse of the sky to separate the day from the night, and let them serve as signs to mark seasons and days and years, 15 and let them be lights in the expanse of the sky to give light on the earth.” And it was so. 16 God made two great lights—the greater light to govern the day and the lesser 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 light from darkness. And God saw that it was good. 19 And there was evening, and there was morning—the fourth day.

20 And God said, “Let the water teem with living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the expanse of the sky.” 21 So God created the great creatures of the sea and every living and moving thing with which the water teems, according to their kinds, and every winged bird according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. 22 God blessed them and said, “Be fruitful and increase in number and fill the water in the seas, and let the birds increase on the earth.” 23 And there was evening, and there was morning—the fifth day.

24 And God said, “Let the land produce living creatures according to their kinds: livestock, creatures that move along the ground, and wild animals, each according to its kind.” And it was so. 25 God made the wild animals according to their kinds, the livestock according to their kinds, and all the creatures that move along the ground according to their kinds. And God saw that it was good.

26 Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.”

27 So God created man in his own image,
in the image of God he created him;
male and female he created them.

28 God blessed them and said to them, “Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground.”

29 Then God said, “I give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food. 30 And to all the beasts of the earth and all the birds of the air and all the creatures that move on the ground—everything that has the breath of life in it—I give every green plant for food.” And it was so.

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2 By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing; so on the seventh day he rested from all his work. 3 And God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done.

Psalm of the Day - Psalm 150

SECOND LESSON - 2 Co 13:11-14

(NIV 2011)

11 Finally, brothers and sisters, rejoice! Strive for full restoration, encourage one another, be of one mind, live in peace. And the God of love and peace will be with you.

12 Greet one another with a holy kiss. 13 All God's people here send their greetings.

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

(NIV 1984)

Finally, brothers, good-by. Aim for perfection, listen to my appeal, be of one mind, live in peace. And the God of love and peace will be with you. ¹² Greet one another with a holy kiss. ¹³ All the saints send their greetings. ¹⁴ May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

GOSPEL READING - Matthew 28:16-20

(NIV 2011)

16 Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go.

17 When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. 18 Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19 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, 20 and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

(NIV 1984)

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."