

5/18/2008

THE INVOCATION AND CALL TO WORSHIP Psalm 8

Lay Minister: 1 O LORD, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth! You have set your glory above the heavens.

People: 2 From the lips of children and infants you have ordained praise because of your enemies, to silence the foe and the avenger.

Lay Minister: 3 When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place,

People: 4 what is man that you are mindful of him, the son of man that you care for him?

Lay Minister: 5 You made him a little lower than the heavenly beings and crowned him with glory and honor.

People: 6 You made him ruler over the works of your hands; you put everything under his feet:

Lay Minister: 7 all flocks and herds, and the beasts of the field, 8 the birds of the air, and the fish of the sea, all that swim the paths of the seas.

People: 9 O LORD, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth!

THE PRAYER OF THE DAY O almighty God, Creator of all that is seen and unseen, You formed us in Your own image when You created us, and, when we had lost Your image because of our sin, made it available to us again in the person of Your Son. Enlighten us with Your Spirit, that we may hear Your voice this day and receive the restoration of life won for us on the cross; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

THE OLD TESTAMENT LESSON Isaiah 55:1-11 (The mystery of God and His call to faith is revealed through the prophecy of Isaiah.)

1 "Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost. 2 Why spend money on what is not bread, and your labor on what does not satisfy? Listen, listen to me, and eat what is good, and your soul will delight in the richest of fare.

3 Give ear and come to me; hear me, that your soul may live. I will make an everlasting covenant with you, my faithful love promised to David. 4 See, I have made him a witness to the peoples, a leader and commander of the peoples. 5 Surely you will summon nations you know not, and nations that do not know you will hasten to you, because of the LORD your God, the Holy One of Israel, for he has endowed you with splendor." 6 Seek the LORD while he may be found; call on him while he is near. 7 Let the wicked forsake his way and the evil man his thoughts. Let him turn to the LORD, and he will have mercy on him, and to our God, for he will freely pardon.

8 "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways," declares the LORD. 9 "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.

10 As the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return to it

without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish, so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater, 11 so is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it.

THE EPISTLE LESSON 2 Corinthians 13:11-14

(These farewell words of St. Paul close with a familiar Trinitarian benediction.)

11 Finally, brothers, good-bye. 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.

THE GOSPEL LESSON Matthew 28:16-20 *(With the command to baptize and make disciples of all nations, Jesus gives us the powerful name of the Trinity.)*

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."**

INTRO - This week there was a major earthquake in China. The last I heard over 30,000 people were dead, hundreds of thousands were homeless, and the authorities were still finding people alive under the rubble a couple of days ago.

This earthquake took place just after a disaster we prayed about in worship last week. A cyclone, a hurricane, hit the country of Myanmar and the estimated death toll is about 150,000 people.

Add that to members taken to the hospital, and bad diagnoses concerning cancer, and this has been a rough week. But, in many ways, the difficulties of this week have taken place many times, unfortunately. It is easy to say our world is a dangerous, painful, place.

I. You might think Jesus's words of love to people under constant assault and difficulty might be, "Take Care of yourself. Go home, take it easy. You've had a rough time. Watch out for yourself."

A. But Jesus words to His church in today's Gospel lesson is the greatest job the church has ever received.

1. It is a job he gave 2000 years ago, and it still is not complete.
2. Jesus told the disciples, and he told all of us, **"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."**

B. You need to know just how important this job is, and many of you do. But, it deserves being restated.

1. In a parallel version of this account, in the Gospel of Mark, Jesus also said on this occasion, **16 Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.**

a. All people deserve death and punishment because of our rebellion and sin against God, our sin which is the ultimate cause of pain in the world.

b. But, because in love Jesus died on the cross and rose again, all who believe in Him are saved from death and hell for eternal life in heaven.

But, all who do not believe are condemned.

3. It is important that we tell people about Jesus, so that as they believe in Jesus they may be saved, and not go to hell. Sometimes we tell about Jesus' saving love through missionaries. Sometimes it happens through works of love and charity. We have helped those in need in our community. Lutheran Social Services is with us today, and they help people in Alaska for us in Jesus' name. In world disasters, Lutheran World Relief is the biggest social service agency in the world.

C. So, in the middle of a dangerous, troubling, painful life, God gives us a difficult and seemingly never ending job.

1. But some in today's painful and busy world might think that this is too much. Life is already difficult.

A. Shouldn't we be protecting ourselves, taking care of ourselves, being careful and staying away from danger as much as possible?

B. The question might be asked, "You mean, in the middle of this difficult life, we have been given a difficult, never ending task?"

2. I know that most of you wouldn't really ask that question. Most of you have known Jesus' forgiveness and call to make disciples since you became Christian.

3. You might not ask that question, but. . . we often act that way.

II. Have you heard the story about the catholic monk who went to the Vatican library to study. He was back in the shelves with the ancient books and scrolls for days, when the others in the library heard a crying wail. "Nooooooooooooo!", he cried. "It says celeBRATE, not celiBATE." That's a joke about a misunderstanding, that, if it had been true would be tragic.

When we look at this section of Scripture, and go right to verses 19 and 20 that call us to make disciples of all nations, we miss some of the most important words that Jesus has said, and we misunderstand the context of Jesus' important call to us. We need to hear, and not miss what Jesus said before and after, "Go and make disciples."

A. Jesus begins by speaking to disciples who were doubting him, and says, **"All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.**

1. This is very much like what we read from Ephesians last week.

2. I have been given authority, that means I'm in charge. I'm ruling over all things. I have all power. I'm stronger than ALL your troubles.

3. Jesus does not say, "Go make disciples. I hope you don't get hurt too badly."

4. Jesus does say, "I have power and authority, THEREFORE, because of this, you can go in my name knowing I can and will watch out for you.

B. It is with verse 18 in mind, that we then can understand the end of this passage.

1. Jesus says, **And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."**

2. I am stronger than any trouble, stronger than any of your enemies.

3. And, even though you may not see me, you're not alone. I am with you.
4. I am with you as Jesus, the one who loved you enough to die for you, and as the all-powerful Jesus who rose again.
5. I am with you as Jesus, the Son of God, as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
6. I'm with you today, in the bread and wine, in the body and blood.

C. When you were a child were you ever sent to do something that scared you? Maybe you were sent to get something from an attic, or basement, that frightened you. Maybe you were sent to apologize to someone who scared you. Did you ever ask, "Mom, Dad, will you go with me?" Sometimes they might have said, 'You'll be alright. I'm right here.' And, they were there for you. But, sometimes maybe they took your hand and went with you.

1. That is what Jesus is saying today. Whether we face earthquakes, hurricanes, illness, or making disciples of all nations, **HE IS WITH US**. In fact, the one who is with us is the all powerful one, who has all authority in heaven and on earth.
2. He sends out to share His love. But, we are not alone, the all loving, **AND** all powerful Savior, Jesus, is with us all the way.
3. In many ways, Matthew 28 is more of God's promise to be with us and help us, than a command to work.

CONCLUSION - There is a famous Irish blessing credited to St. Patrick. Maybe you've heard it. It goes like this. **May the road rise to meet you, May the wind be always at your back, May the sun shine warm upon your face, The rains fall soft upon your fields and, Until we meet again, May God hold you in the palm of His hand.** This prayer or blessing asks God's presence in front of us, and behind us, and throughout life. But, notice the word "May" however. This prayer sounds like a wish, or hope for these blessings. In our lesson Jesus says he is behind us, with all authority and power. He is in front of us, always staying with us. **THEREFORE**, we can go, as his children, making disciples, in words and in actions. Amen.