

*I
am with you
always*
Matthew 28:20

June 7, 2020

Introduction and Welcome
Invitation

Call to Worship:

Come, Triune God! Fill us with your love, joy, and caring as we worship together today. Make your presence known to us in this time as we lift our voices in praise to you!

Hymn: "Holy, Holy, Holy! Lord God Almighty"

Reading the Word: Matthew 28:16-20

Message: "Commissioned"

Rev. Dr. Deb Hanson

Prayer:

Father, Son, Holy Spirit/Creator, Savior, Comforter/Rock, Redeemer, Companion, we are called to baptize in your triune name and to bring others to know your love. You send us forth into the world as your church, commissioning us to minister to all who are in need, lonely, hurting, or seeking comfort, compassion, and kindness. Fill us with joy and enthusiasm to BE your church wherever we are in whatever way we are able. Thank you for the gifts you have given us to share and for the assurance of your presence with us always. Amen.

The Lord's Prayer:

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil, for Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever. Amen.

Holy Communion

Hymn: "Go Ye, Go Ye into the World"

Blessing

A large, rustic wooden cross stands prominently on the right side of the image, its weathered beams contrasting with the vibrant blue sky. The background is a breathtaking view of a deep, green valley with a winding river, surrounded by steep, forested mountains under a clear, bright blue sky. The overall scene conveys a sense of peace and spiritual significance.

Matthew 28:16-20

The Commissioning of the Disciples

Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 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, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age."



SERMON TRANSCRIPT GIVEN BY
REV. DR. DEB HANSON

Message: “Commissioned”

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“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, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the earth.” Matthew 28:19-20 NRSV

Let us begin with a prayer:

Merciful God, we confess that we have not loved you with our whole heart. We have failed to be an obedient church. We have not done your will, we have broken your law, we have rebelled against your love, and we have not heard the cry of the needy. Forgive us, we pray. Free us for joyful obedience, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. (United Methodist Hymnal, p. 8, A Service of Word and Table)

This is one of the prayers of confession in our communion liturgies. It is a profound admission of our own sinful nature and our need for forgiveness. It is a call to awareness that we are called to live in ways that share God’s love and care for others in our lives and in our world. And yet, for many of us, we may feel that we live in a time of uncertainty and fear, of unrest and isolation, of division and violence.

Let me share another time and place with you. It was during the time of Jesus when the oppressive Roman government occupied and ruled over Israel. Kings of Israel were allowed to stay on the throne if they cooperated with the Romans, and anyone who challenged Roman authority was considered an insurrectionist and thrown in prison, and most often put to death.

The majority of Israelites were poor because they paid a high tax to the Roman government as well as to their Temple, and on top of that, the tax collectors added their own excessive fees. It was hard to make a living, and many lived in fear of being arrested even when they hadn’t done anything wrong.

Is it any wonder that the nation of Israel longed for their Messiah to come soon and save them? And then along came Jesus, born to a poor Jewish couple, arriving from Nazareth, teaching and preaching contrary to what the Temple leaders taught. It was Jesus who brought many of the Jewish teachings to a new place and a new understanding. He taught about God’s love, acceptance, and grace, and he demonstrated that no one - NO ONE was excluded from a healing touch, forgiveness, and most of all, God’s love. Jesus brought the people hope. He taught his disciples every day, and he trained them to carry on after he was gone.

He made a lot of enemies, especially with the Temple leaders, and eventually, he was arrested, tried, and put to death, the Roman punishment: a horrible, humiliating death on a cross. His followers lived in fear, anxiety, and probably thought things could not have been worse.

That's when it happened! Jesus was raised from the dead, and he appeared to the disciples and reminded them of everything he had taught them. But then he ascended into heaven, and as he left, he instructed them to make disciples of all nations, baptizing in the name of the Holy Trinity. Jesus was not dead, but alive - alive forevermore. Jesus sent the Spirit to empower them and to remind them of all he had taught them.

He commissioned his disciples, and his Church to follow his example and share his teachings. You see, in the midst of one of the darkest times in their lives, there was hope. Hope that things would eventually get better, and hope that life would go on. Maybe not as it was before, but it would move forward. They could learn from it and become stronger because of it, and that is what we need the most in our time - hope. Where do we find that hope?

It is in the Church of Jesus Christ - all of us who have been commissioned to speak the message of hope and salvation in Jesus, even when we feel discouraged, fearful, and angry. Jesus gives us hope that things will change, but we must do our part, as well. We must speak out for the George Floyds of the world - anyone who is mistreated, oppressed, murdered, ostracized, or abused. We must be the hope in the ways we speak, act, and interact with others. We must bring the hope of acceptance, grace, forgiveness, justice, and God's love.

Friends, we need to have hope even when it feels like there isn't any reason to have it.

The prophet Micah shared God's message with Israel (and with all of us). It is a challenge from God in chapter 6, verse 8: "He has told you; O mortal, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?"

My heart continues to break over the injustices in our world and the mistreatment of one human toward another or one nation against another. I feel outrage at George Floyd's death and all who have died senselessly because of racism. We CAN make a difference, and we DO have a choice as to how we will act. We can choose to ignore, be apathetic, deny the situation, or speak out and act for justice, love, kindness, and walk humbly with God.

Every day is a choice. Let us remember that Jesus is with us, and let us remember his commission to BE the church in the world. Our building may be closed, but the church is open and active in the world! We can make a difference, not because of our own strength, but because we have a community of faith throughout the world who can minister to those wherever they are. Let us live as an Easter people, forgiven, loved, and commissioned to make a difference.