

And if that sounds like too much for us to handle, you are right. It's way more than we can handle. That's why Jesus adds his last words. One more thing about God that he wants you to fit in your head and heart: "Surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." You are not alone. We are not alone. Nothing that we do is done on our own. Everything we do in Jesus' name is done with the power of the Triune God behind us. There is no dad bigger than your Dad—the Father. There is no brother better than your brother—Jesus! There is no power bigger than the power that lives inside you—the Spirit. God is with you always. That's Jesus' promise.

Because one day, a Father abandoned his own Son. It's one thing to be rejected by a neighbor. It hurts quite a bit more when you're rejected by a friend. But the pain really begins to be unbearable when you're abandoned by your own family—a son or daughter, a father or mother. That's what Jesus experienced for you. As he hung on the cross, God his Father abandoned him so that he would never abandon us. The Father punished his Son, so that he could forever love us. God is not just bigger than our understanding. He is bigger than our sins. God is bigger than our failings. And he proved it when the Father watched his Son die on the cross to save us. You are forgiven! Heaven is waiting for you. There is no God like our God!

So on this Trinity Sunday, as you wait to see your God face to face in heaven, let Jesus' words fill your head and your heart. "*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.*" It's great to know that God is bigger than we are. It's exciting to know that God's mission for us is bigger than we are too. So let's go!

Matthew 28:16-20
Rev. Nathan Nass

Holy Trinity Sunday
June 15, 2014

¹⁶Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. ¹⁷When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. ¹⁸Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

God Is Bigger than We Are

An old pastor in Africa named Augustine was once struggling with the very thing we're talking about today—the Trinity. How can there be one God, but three persons—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit? So he decided to go for a walk on the beach next to the ocean. And as he walked, he met a little boy who was digging a hole in the sand. Saint Augustine asked the boy, "What are you doing?" With a big smile, he said, "I'm gonna put the ocean in my hole." Augustine smiled and shook his head. "Kids!" But as he walked away, he realized something. That's exactly what he had been trying to do. He had been trying to take our great God and fit him inside his little head.

And God doesn't fit. Like the ocean in some hole in the sand, God doesn't fit in our heads. If he did, he wouldn't be God. God is bigger than we are! And one good example of that is the Trinity. When God describes himself in his Word, he always says there is only one God. But then, as he does today, he calls himself Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. How does that work? The Father is not the Son. He didn't die on the cross. The Son is not the Holy Spirit. He didn't come to the disciples on Pentecost. But the Father is God. The Son is God. The Holy Spirit is God. There are three persons, but one God. Got that? I can't understand it completely. But I believe it!

Christians have tried to think up ways to understand this. St. Patrick in Ireland used a three-leafed clover. It's got three leaves, and each leaf is different, yet there's still just one clover, just like Father, Son, and Holy Spirit make up one God. Or the most famous symbol of the Trinity is a triangle. It has three sides and three angles, but it's just one triangle. If you take away one side or one angle, it's not a triangle anymore. Those help us understand our God. But at the end of the day, God is not a clover or a triangle. He's our God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. It's good for us as Christians to get used to humbly admitting to God: "God, you are bigger than we are!"

But like that little boy could put a little bit of the ocean into his hole in the sand,

God encourages us to always grow deeper and deeper in our knowledge and love for him through his Word. He wants us to know and love him! So today Jesus gives us some of the clearest words in the Bible about who God is and what his purpose is for our lives. Jesus says, *“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.”*

You’ve heard those words before. Many times before. But did you ever stop and think about how bold Jesus is? *“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.”* That’s quite a claim! There are quite a few things going on in heaven and on earth, and as part of the Trinity, Jesus has authority over all of it. Jesus has power over the angels in heaven and the demons in hell. Power over wind and rain and tornados. Power over those little cancer cells that we still haven’t learned how to control. There is no power in heaven or on earth that Jesus doesn’t have. There is nothing he doesn’t control. Isn’t that a good thing? It is good to know that our God is bigger than we are!

That’s just what Jesus’ disciples needed to hear. The disciples had gone to a mountain in Galilee, just like Jesus had told them. And *“when they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted.”* We’re not told what they doubted, but I bet we could guess. They probably doubted the very same things that you and I doubt about God. Can he really do what he says he can do? Does he really love me? Is he really controlling our lives? Because sometimes it doesn’t look like he is! Life seems out of control. There are shootings all over the U.S. Each one of you knows someone with a terrible disease. I don’t know where my life is going. I don’t know how to get through.

But hold on—God is bigger than we are! It is absolutely true that our lives are out of control. They are out of *our* control. And the sooner we realize that the better it will be for us. Because then we can hear and believe Jesus’ words to us: *“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.”* Do you know what doubt is? Doubt is refusing to believe that God is really as big as he says he is. Doubt is worrying that the troubles we face are bigger than our God. But as the famous philosopher Jr. Asparagus on Veggie Tales says, *“God is bigger than the boogie man. He’s bigger than Godzilla or the monsters on TV.”* It is good that God is bigger than we are!

And God has a mission for us that’s bigger than us too. Jesus says: *“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.”* Sometimes we get it in our heads that God exists for us. But it shouldn’t be a surprise that the God who is bigger than us has a mission that’s bigger than us too. The Triune God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—brought you into his family through baptism. He saved you through Jesus’

death on the cross. He is your God. But he doesn’t just want to be your God. God is bigger than that! He wants to be everybody’s God.

So he gives his church this mission: *“Go and make disciples of all nations.”* As God’s church, our top priority is to help people know Jesus as their Savior from sin. Jesus tells us what to do—*“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.”* This is our mission from God. Not to sit here and wait for people to come to us, but to go! Not just to where we’re comfortable, to people like us, but to go to all nations! Not just to mention a thing or two about church, but to teach them everything I have commanded you. God is bigger than us, and his mission is bigger than us too!

I wish you could see all the great things God is doing right now. I was at a convention this last week, and it’s downright exciting to hear what God is using our little Wisconsin Synod to do. Tens of thousands of people in Nepal—I couldn’t even pick out Nepal on a map!—now believe in Jesus as their Savior. In Pakistan, where Christians are persecuted, there are now 30 Lutheran churches where Pakistanis hear God’s Word every week. Right here in the U.S. we opened up ten brand new churches in 2013 in places like South Carolina, Arizona, and North Dakota. And as amazing as that is, it shouldn’t be surprising, because when the Triune God who has all authority in heaven and on earth tells us to go out in his name with his power, he will bless us.

So how are we doing? Our church exists to *“serve all people in God’s world with the Gospel of Jesus Christ.”* That’s what our mission statement says. But I’m afraid it can be easy to lose our focus on our mission—saving the lost. It’s easy to be distracted by other things. It’s easy to think other people will do it. It’s easy to think we’re just fine the way we are. But God’s church is never just fine the way it is, because God’s church was created to be constantly on the move, to be going and searching for those who need Jesus. No matter how many members join or how busy we get. We are not a club. We are a lifesaving station. That is the mission of God’s church.

So where to you fit in? There shouldn’t be a single person in this church today who doesn’t think they have a part in God’s purpose for his church. If you just look at the next two months, we need smiling faces to greet those who come to church, bakers to make cakes and salads for funerals, English teachers, walkers in our 4th of July parade, Soccer Camp coaches, VBS helpers, lawn cutters, window washers, church cleaners...You get the point! And if you also look at the financial numbers on the back of the Evangel, you’ll see that we need people to give generously to God’s work here at our church and around the world. Don’t think someone else is going to do it. Don’t wait for someone to ask you, because right now I am asking you. Our God is bigger than us, and he’s given us a mission that’s bigger than us. So we need every one of you!