

Pastors Network

Church of the
Lutheran
Brethren

First Sunday after Pentecost (Series A)

June 15th, 2014

Gospel: Matthew 28:16-20

Epistle: Acts 2:14a, 22-36

Lesson: Genesis 1:1-2:4a

Psalm: Psalm 8

CLB Commentary – Rev. Bill Helland

Most, if not all of us, know the value of a succinct purpose (or mission) statement. Such a statement guides us in our mission and sets boundaries that keep us focused on the purpose we believe God has set for our lives and ministries.

Though this passage is best known as The Great Commission, and is often joined with The Great Commandment (Matthew 22:34-40), it is a succinct “purpose statement,” which has established our mission and sets boundaries that are intended to keep us focused on the purpose which God has set for his children and the church here on earth.

That all sounds well and good except for one thing - our sinful nature, that is prone to question and challenge authority at every turn. It is a natural fruit of The Fall when Satan questioned Eve, “Did God really say...?” (Genesis 3:1) and resulted in humanity questioning God’s authority ever since.

“Go and make disciples...”

Who says?

“Baptize them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit...”

Who says?

“Teach them to obey...”

Who says?

The One to whom all authority has been given says so, that’s who.

The divine authority, with which this purpose (mission) statement was given us, cannot be ignored. But notice the context in which it was given. This was not a Mount Sinai command with smoke and thunder, earthquakes, and the booming voice of God. NO! This command - this commissioning - flowed out of grace. The cross of Christ and his glorious resurrection was the

context for this commissioning. Yes, the authority was the authority of the same God that descended upon Mount Sinai and gave Moses the Law, but it was also the authority of the God of all grace and compassion - the God who is not willing that any should perish.

If we hear (and preach) this Great Commission only as Law, it stirs up the sinful nature to set its jaw, clench its fist and blurt out, "Who says?!" But if we hear (and preach) this Great Commission as God's loving and gracious purpose for the church - a purpose that flows from the cross where Christ prayed for us, "Father forgive them, for they know not what they are doing," a purpose that bursts forth from an empty tomb with resurrection power - then, by the working of the Holy Spirit, it can stir within our hearts, and the hearts of our listeners, the same grace and mercy of God which loves our sinful, broken world and wants nothing more than to see every soul become a disciple.