



JESUS OF NAZARETH
MAKE DISCIPLES
MATTHEW 28:16-20
12-27-20

All = bold sections – read together

Leader = regular font – leader reads (choose or rotate leaders)

Sung together = italics

NOTE: Please have a white candle ready to light.

Reflect

The greatest issue facing the world today, with all its heartbreaking needs, is whether those who, by profession or culture, are identified as ‘Christians’ will become disciples – students, apprentices, practitioners – of Jesus Christ, steadily learning from him how to live the life of the Kingdom of the Heavens into every corner of human existence.”

— Dallas Willard, “The Great Omission: Reclaiming Jesus’s Essential Teachings on Discipleship”

Welcome

Welcome to our last Sunday of 2020! Wow! What a year. Yes, there was a lot of challenging issues that we faced (pandemic, protests and a highly polarized presidential election), there was much good too (baptisms, opportunities to worship in different settings and contexts, friends, accomplishments – plus, the sun rose and set everyday like it always has). Like we always do and always will do, no matter what the circumstances we find ourselves in, we gather to be the representative body of Jesus and give witness to him in worship through song, prayer, reading of scripture, the sacraments and the preaching and teaching of the gospel.

Jesus was a realistic optimist. That is, he first saw the good in his creation and the potential for what it can be (and indeed will be in him), but he was also a realist, aware of the impact of sin and evil that is currently distorting and hindering it. As we close out 2020 and enter into 2021 may we have the same posture and attitude of Jesus – optimism for what the ultimate future holds when he comes back again and realistic that for now, there are obstacles and hindrances that we make or others make that also make life challenging and extremely hard at times. Who knows what 2021 might hold for us. It may be a far easier year with less challenges and obstacles. It may be a far worse year (I know that is hard to imagine for some, but it is true nonetheless) with greater challenges and obstacles. That is why this invocation is so important to believe and know in an experiential way to live well as Jesus’ disciples today and into the future no matter what it coming our way.

May the love and joy of the Father, the grace and peace of the Son and the courage and comfort of the Holy Spirit be ours in abundance this morning.

Call to Worship – Psalm 37:1–9

This is one of my favorite Psalms. It is a call delight. Not a passive delight but a delight that is found in subservient faithfulness and obedience to God. The call to delight is preceded by the call to “fret not” and not be envious of the wicked and is followed by the call to “commit” and “trust” and “be still” and “wait patiently” and fret not and to “refrain” and “forsake.” In all this we delight in God and for God’s promise he will give us the desires of our heart; that he will act for us; that he will bring forth our



righteousness and justice as noonday light and give us the earth. This “heart desire” is not from a selfish heart or a heart that reflects the values and dreams and desires of the worldly culture but images and is in line with the will of God as revealed in scripture. When do we experience this delight? A foretaste now. Fully when he returns again bodily to judge the living and the dead and “cuts off” the evildoers forever and who are already fading away like the grass.

Fret not yourself because of evildoers; be not envious of wrongdoers! For they will soon fade like the grass and wither like the green herb.

Trust in the LORD, and do good; dwell in the land and befriend faithfulness. Delight yourself in the LORD, and he will give you the desires of your heart. Commit your way to the LORD; trust in him, and he will act.

He will bring forth your righteousness as the light, and your justice as the noonday. Be still before the LORD and wait patiently for him; fret not yourself over the one who prospers in his way, over the man who carries out evil devices!

Refrain from anger, and forsake wrath! Fret not yourself; it tends only to evil. For the evildoers shall be cut off, but those who wait for the LORD shall inherit the land.

Song – Behold Our God -- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gqrl3Lkf58>

Our God is worthy of beholding and honoring and worshiping and following and giving our lives to and for. This song speaks to the glory of God, his supremacy and beauty and majesty!

*Who has held the oceans in his hands?
Who has numbered every grain of sand?
Kings and nations tremble at his voice
All creation rises to rejoice*

*Behold our God, seated on his throne
Come, let us adore him
Behold our king, nothing can compare
Come, let us adore him*

*Who has given counsel to the Lord?
Who can question any of his words?
Who can teach, the one who knows all things?
Who can fathom all his wondrous deeds?*

*Behold our God, seated on his throne
Come, let us adore him
Behold our king, nothing can compare
Come, let us adore him*

*Who has felt the nails upon his hands?
Bearing all the guilt of sinful man
God eternal, humbled to the grave
Jesus, Savior, risen now to reign*



*Behold our God, seated on his throne
Come, let us adore him
Behold our king, nothing can compare
Come, let us adore Him*

Christ Candle – Vietnam

Jesus of Nazareth said that to be a Christian means to be maltreated for his name's sake (Matthew 5:11) and the apostle Paul said that "everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ will be persecuted" (2 Timothy 3:12). Mistreatment as a disciple of Jesus is not a matter of *if* but a matter of *when* and a matter of *degree*. Hope is a vital aspect of being a disciple of Jesus. This is especially true under heavy persecution. In America, the land of religious freedom, we have it pretty easy in that there is minimal outright persecution against Christians. **May we make the most of our religious freedom to honor Christ and give credible and coherent witness to him! At the same time, may we be aware of our brothers and sisters in Christ around the world who don't share the same freedom that we do. The 21st place that is most challenging to be a disciple of Jesus is Vietnam.**

Of the 100 million people living in Vietnam, 9 million are considered Christians. Christians in Vietnam are targeted by both the government and, especially in rural contexts, tribal leaders. The government has some level of tolerance for Christian groups, particularly Catholics, but if any believers are deemed to be politically active, they can be imprisoned. In places where religion and ethnic identity are closely tied, Christians who convert from traditional religions are often the victims of pressure and violence from their families and communities.

Prayer Points: Pray with the pastors who travel into rural areas to minister to ethnic believers who have formed small church communities. Pray for believers who leave their traditional faiths to follow Jesus. Pray for wisdom and strength for disciples of Jesus trying to navigate ever-changing regulations and expectations from the communist regime.

Jesus is the Light. We are a light. Shine His light!

Song – Joy To The World -- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GKa2by1yOuw&feature=emb_logo

In the Christian Liturgical Calendar, it is Christmastime – the third day of the 12 days that celebrate the incarnation of the Word of God. The absolute appropriate response is joy in that which God has done for us because of his great love and grace and mercy towards us. May you experience the joy of Christmas and glory of the greatest Gift ever given, Jesus of Nazareth.

*Joy to the world! the Lord is come;
Let earth receive her King;
Let every heart prepare him room,
And heaven and nature sing,
And heaven and nature sing,
And heaven, and heaven, and nature sing.
Joy to the world! the Saviour reigns;
Let men their songs employ;
While fields and floods, rocks, hills, and plains*



*Repeat the sounding joy,
Repeat the sounding joy,
Repeat, repeat the sounding joy.
No more let sins and sorrows grow,
Nor thorns infest the ground;
He comes to make His blessings flow
Far as the curse is found,
Far as the curse is found,
Far as, far as, the curse is found.
He rules the world with truth and grace,
And makes the nations prove
The glories of His righteousness,
And wonders of His love,
And wonders of His love,
And wonders, wonders, of His love.*

Song – Angels From The Realms Of Glory -- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MsplteOk-OE&feature=emb_logo

*Angels from the realms of glory,
Wing your flight o'er all the earth;
Ye who sang creation's story,
Now proclaim Messiah's birth:
Come and worship,
Come and worship,
Worship Christ, the newborn King!
Shepherds, in the fields abiding,
Watching o'er your flocks by night,
God with man is now residing,
Yonder shines the infant Light;
Come and worship,
Come and worship,
Worship Christ, the newborn King!
Sages, leave your contemplations,
Brighter visions beam afar;
Seek the great desire of nations,
Ye have seen His natal star;
Come and worship,
Come and worship,
Worship Christ, the newborn King!
Saints before the altar bending,
Watching long in hope and fear,
Suddenly the Lord, descending,
In His temple shall appear:*



*Come and worship,
Come and worship,
Worship Christ, the newborn King!*

Centering Prayer – Zechariah’s Prayer

Zechariah was the Father of John the Baptist and a priest that served in the temple in Jerusalem. Zechariah was an uncle-in-law to Jesus of Nazareth who would be born shortly after John. He was considered “righteous before God” although he doubted the angel Gabriel when told that he and his wife Elizabeth would have a child who would prepare the way for the Lord because they were old and past the age of having children naturally. Because of this doubt, he was made mute, unable to speak until his son, John was born. It was at this moment, when he was finally able to speak again that he uttered the words below to God. Read this as a prayer.

**Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel;
he has come to his people and set them free.
He has raised up for us a mighty savior,
born of the house of his servant David.**

Through his holy prophets he promised of old
that he would save us from our enemies,
from the hands of all who hate us.
He promised to show mercy to our fathers
and to remember his holy covenant.

**This was the oath he swore to our father Abraham:
to set us free from the hands of our enemies,
free to worship him without fear,
holy and righteous in his sight all the days of our life.**

You, my child, shall be called the prophet of the Most High;
for you will go before the Lord to prepare his way,
to give his people knowledge of salvation
by the forgiveness of their sins.

**In the tender compassion of our God
the dawn from on high shall break upon us,
to shine on those who dwell in darkness and the shadow of death,
and to guide our feet into the way of peace.**

Offering – Caitlyn Hitch - Navigators

We specifically support Caitlyn Hitch who works as a counselor in Scotland. The Navigators is a ministry that shares the gospel of Jesus and helps people grow in their relationship with Him through Life-to-Life discipleship, creating spiritual generations of believers amongst other things. Since its founding in 1933, The Navigators has upheld the mission “To know Christ, make him known, and help others do the same.”

We remember that giving is an act of faith, a practice of hope and an expression of love.



(You can give by sending your offering to the church, P.O. Box 217, Oakdale Ca 95361 or consider giving online through your bank. Our deacons can help you with this if necessary.)

Youth Celebration – Matthew 1:24–25

When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him: he took his wife, but knew her not until she had given birth to a son. And he called his name Jesus.

Jesus was a child. That is a shocking statement when we awake to who Jesus is. Being a child, he validates the value of childhood. Ponder the reality of God being a child and what that might mean for our relationship with children and the way we parent.

Scripture Reading – Matthew 28:16-20

Here we are – one year later from the time we started this journey through the gospel according to Matthew. We have arrived to the last passage, the last verses of this holy, inspired writing. Matthew has been our written guide. The Holy Spirit has been our spiritual guide. Both have pointed us to Jesus – Jesus of Nazareth – the Biblical Jesus – God in the flesh – our Creator and Savior and Lord. We have seen much and heard much including the five discourses of Jesus: (1) Matthew 5-7 – Sermon on the Mount. (2) Matthew 10 – Commissioning of the disciples. (3) Matthew 13 – Parables of the Kingdom. (4) Matthew 18 – On the Church. (5) Matthew 23-25 – The Olivet discourse of the end times. Jesus of Nazareth was portrayed as The Prophet, The Priest and The King. The final words Matthew offers us from Jesus are his instructions for the disciples to make disciples. This is often called the Great Commission and has, rightfully been understood as the central work and mandate of the Church – the community of disciples that makes disciples of Jesus Christ.

You have heard and recited these verses nearly every week this year, albeit in a paraphrased way. They are familiar to you. Maybe too familiar. Ponder these words anew. Ponder them from the perspective of a year long journey through Matthew. Ponder them from the perspective of a year impacted by pandemic, protest and presidential polarization. Please read Matthew 28:16-20 now.

Gospel Message – Make Disciples

Gaps. Most of the time they are a problem. A gap between your teeth or in your tooth is fixed with braces or a filling. A gap between land created by a river is overcome by a bridge. A gap in insurance coverage is circumvented with supplemental coverage. A gap between the ventricles in your heart is repaired by surgery. A gap in recording ruins the media. A gap between a job's requirements and the skills to perform them is solved by training. A gap in the road is filled in with asphalt. It is often said that we are to "mind the gap," that is, be aware of it so that you don't fall into it. But is that enough? Is simply being aware of a gap sufficient. Given the above examples, no. Gaps are not just meant to be minded but closed. We are to close gaps. What does this have to do with church and the message – much!

There is a discipleship gap that exists within the church and with individuals that has created credibility and coherency gaps of witness to Jesus of Nazareth and his kingdom here on earth. This discipleship gap is the space between what we say we believe and what we actually live out. It is the breach between who we say we are and what we end up doing. In other words, between our identity and practices. For example, if your identity is being a baseball player than to have no gaps between your identity and practices means that all the things you are doing are consistent with being a baseball



player. If you incorporated other things, say hockey or football then a gap appears because your identity is not a hockey or football player. You are out of character so to speak. People would be confused about your identity as a baseball player if they saw you and heard you acting and speaking like a hockey or football player. This discipleship gap problem is not surprising or unusual or new. Every church and every individual disciple have it to one degree or another because none of us (or church) are perfect. We sin. We all have a gap between our identity in Christ and the practices we engage with. We deny and rebel and reject and ignore Jesus and his teachings. When we do this, a gap appears. The goal of discipleship is not just to mind the gap, but to strive to shrink the gap (we cannot close it entirely as that is impossible this side of Jesus' return because of our proclivity to still sin as saints). Why? So that our credibility and coherency as witnesses increase. Credibility and coherency refer to our integrity as disciples. Is there enough evidence and consistency in my life that creates credibility and coherency between what I say and do? Notice that there is an inverse relationship between the discipleship gap and our credibility and coherency. The more the gap increases, the more our credibility and coherence decreases. The more the gap decreases the more our credibility and coherency increases. The more I engage with hockey practices (both verbally and visibly) the less I am credible and coherent with and identity as a baseball player. The more I engage with baseball practices (both verbally and visibly) the more I become credible and coherent.

Why is this a big deal? Because Jesus has instructed his disciples that they are to be about making disciples. Disciples make disciples. This has been called The Great Commission and indeed it is great! These are Jesus' parting words in the book of Matthew and carry much significance and weight. If you knew you were physically departing the one you love you would want to impart something that is important to you and them. This is what Jesus is doing here. He is bringing final emphasis to the themes that Matthew has highlighted throughout the book: Jesus' authority, discipleship, obedience of faith and that God is with us and for us in Jesus of Nazareth. We will look at all four in order as they pertain to making disciples of Jesus and how they serve to create a discipleship culture within the Church that fosters, nurtures and embodies disciplinemaking as a natural and unified mission of every ministry and every group and every event and every person. The church has a credibility problem that stems from a discipleship problem – a problem characterized by the large gap between identifying as Christian but not acting like one on a very consistent or regular basis that causes others to doubt or discredit our witness. Having said this, it is important to remember what we have said on multiple occasions: we are not responsible for how people respond to our witness but we are responsible for what people respond to. That is, if we accurately and authentically (truthfully and graciously) present Christ to others, we will be a "successful" witness no matter what the response is whether ignorance, persecution, skepticism, curiosity or acceptance. On the other hand, if we do not present the Biblical Jesus of Nazareth and his good news of the kingdom accurately and authentically, then we are not a "successful" witness and the problem is with us, even if they accept because now they have accepted or assented to something and someone that is not the Biblical Jesus of Nazareth. We were false witnesses leading people to a false Christ. So yes, this is kind of a big deal! :-)

The Authority of Christ: First and foundational for creating an accurate and authentic discipleship culture is the authority of Jesus of Nazareth. Why? Because discipleship is about Jesus from beginning to end, A to Z and through and through. Our text says that all authority in heaven and on earth has



been given to Jesus. Not part or some or most or a little – but all. That means no one or no thing has authority in heaven and on earth that is equal to or above Jesus. He reigns. His victories over sin and death left no doubt and solidly vindicated him as the one and only God-Man; sent by the Father out of love for the world in order to save the world through him. Earlier in Matthew we saw Jesus’ authority clearly. He had authority over nature by the immediate calming of a raging storm – nature is subservient to Jesus of Nazareth. He had authority over sickness and disease – biology is subservient to Jesus of Nazareth. He had authority over demons – the spiritual world is subservient to Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus had authority to forgive sins and the authority to reveal the Father. Jesus has authority over sin, living the perfect life of obedience to the Father and never sinning, ever. Jesus of Nazareth has authority over death as he arose from the dead – resurrection, that is, life after life after death. Now he boldly declares that all authority is his. Jesus can legitimately claim this because he is fully God and only God has full authority, that is sovereignty. It was also given to him as fully human, resurrected human – humanity as it will be in the future for those found in Christ, the second and better Adam. His authority is ushering in a new order of existence that will not be fully consummated until he comes again bodily to judge the living and the dead and remove all evil forever. Furthermore, Jesus of Nazareth is in charge of establishing his kingdom here on earth as a sign and foretaste of the kingdom to come with his bodily arrival. He is sovereign King and his ruling and establishing set the foundation for creating a discipleship culture that makes disciples of his. A failure to regularly and consistently preach Jesus of Nazareth as having full authority and who is currently reigning will fail to make disciples because the foundation that will be created is not Jesus Christ but an unqualified and illegitimate authority and power that is sand and not the Solid Rock of Jesus of Nazareth (the preacher, wealth, success, entertainment, legalism, licentiousness etc). And All-Authority, Sovereign, King Jesus of Nazareth commands his disciples to make disciples. Jesus Christ is not suggesting we do this. He is not hoping we will do this. He is not trying to convince us to do this. He is not asking us to do this. No. He is ordering us to do this. It is not optional nor is it up to us to decide whether or not we are going to do it. It is not up for debate. It is not negotiable. It is a command. This is the reason for creating a discipleship culture. Indeed, it is the reason the mission of the church is to make disciples.

There are then three participles (meaning ongoing action) that receive the force of the command to make disciples and operate similarly but subordinately. They are “go,” “baptizing,” and “teaching.” These subordinate participles describe the process of making disciples and are vital. That is, if missing or minimally present then a discipleship culture will never take root or it will die or it will become dysfunctional and distorted.

The Mission of Christ: Second for creating an accurate and authentic discipleship culture is the focus on disciple making as normative for the mission of the Church – all of it. Jesus says “go.” The verb can be equally translated this way, “as you are going.” It implies journeying over time and something that is done all along the way. In other words, an ongoing process – as you are going, make disciples. Jesus was sent by the Father and he made disciples; now Jesus is sending his disciples to make disciples (that is, the Church – the verb is plural referring to the 11 disciples). God is a missional God that sends. The church is missional in that it is both sent and it sends. Go. Where? Go to all nations across the inhabitable world. Not some. Not many. All. This is why the Church sends missionaries into places where the gospel of Jesus Christ has not been proclaimed or heard. All peoples, tongues and tribes are



valuable to God and therefore they are valuable to us. However, the Church also creates missionaries of every disciple to give witness to Jesus of Nazareth and his kingdom. Whether here or elsewhere, at work, school, with family and neighborhood, the gospel is preached (albeit taking the context and culture into serious consideration of what that will actually look like), taught and followed by all those who claim to be Christian. Everyone is a witness. Thus, evangelism (which is giving witness to Jesus) is an essential aspect of being a disciple. Another angle to this is understanding being a disciple of Jesus as the continuous faithful action of “putting on Christ” for others to see and hear. It is to image God and be in his likeness in all we say and do – this is the godliness that disciples are called to. Furthermore, every ministry within the Church is missional in that it helps further the mission of making disciples. Each ministry contributes in their unique way but they all contribute. There are no exceptions. This is a life-long, corporate process in which each member and ministry does their part for the flourishing of the Church in making disciples of Jesus Christ. It is therefore vital that every person and every ministry knows the mission and are empowered and equipped to carry it out. This is the work of the leaders of the church to ensure and instill. Thus, the mission of Christ for his Church gives it purpose in him to get after making disciples of all peoples. While this is not an option for the Church, she should never think of it as an “I have to” but as an “I get to.” It is a joy, privilege, honor and delight to serve our Master in his mission of making disciples today.

Putting on Christ: Third for creating an accurate and authentic discipleship culture is the enacting the sacrament of baptism in order to establish a baptismal identity in Christ. Baptism is trinitarian. Those baptized are to be baptized in the name of the Father, and the Son and the Holy Spirit. “Name” is commonly used in scripture to refer to God’s power and authority. Thus, baptism is grounded in the giving grace of the Triune God in regards to power and authority. That is, baptism is first, foremost and finally about God and his gracious action towards his people. Essentially, baptism is an identifying action. Baptism identifies at least four things that are true about a disciple of Jesus. (1) They are forgiven. They are not condemned in Christ. Their sins have been “washed” away by Jesus’ sacrificial and substitutionary life and death. A believer’s justification before a Holy God is not found in them but found in Jesus of Nazareth. (2) They are a child of God by grace. That is, they have a new identity – they have been born again. Our citizenship has been transferred from the kingdom of this world to the kingdom of God. We have been made family and heirs of eternal life in Christ. (3) We are a member of the body of Christ, the Church. That is, we are not just individuals but individuals in community. Our identity is not seen simply through individualist eyes but also through corporate eyes. We belong to each other and have responsibilities to each other depending on the abilities and resources that God has given us through his Holy Spirit. These last two are where the term “baptismal identity” derives from – that we are new creations in Christ and are members of Christ’s body. This same baptismal identity that we all have in Christ unifies us in our mission of making disciples. (4) All three of these are true because we are “in Christ.” Baptism signifies our dying with Christ and being raised with Christ – his death and resurrection. This union with Christ (Christ in me and I in Christ language that the New Testament uses around 150 times) makes possible the “great exchange” of Jesus taking my sins and being crucified in my place and giving me his righteousness that I did not earn or deserve – solely by grace. Furthermore, we are raised to life in Christ through the forgiveness of sins and to a new identity as new creations in him. Because Jesus of Nazareth is really “in us” and we are “in him,” we can give true verbal and visible witness to him so that others see and hear Christ when we speak and act in



Christ. This is how “putting on Christ” is really possible and not some theological fiction. Baptism is unfortunately often underappreciated and not talked about much apart from actual baptisms. In order to nurture a robust discipleship culture, a solid baptismal identity is essential.

Living Under Christ. Fourth for creating an accurate and authentic discipleship culture is teaching all that Jesus commands. Now that an identity in Christ and for Christ has been established in our baptismal identity, what are we to do? Everything that Jesus has commanded! The way a person develops as a disciple is through the transforming power of the Word of God – the words and actions of Jesus Christ (the acts of God interpret the words of God – thus, the acts of Jesus interpret the words of Jesus). Be transformed by the renewal of your mind says the Apostle Paul in Romans 12:2. With a new identity as a new creation in Christ, we think differently. We train to think with the mind of Christ (1 Corinthians 2:16) so that we might make wise decisions towards the obedience of faith that images Christ Jesus. Notice that the “them” indicates that every person is to be taught and therefore part of the process of discipleship. Thus, all Christians are disciples. In saying, “all that I commanded” Jesus is likely referring not to a set of specific commands but to the entirety of Jesus’ life – especially as it is connected as the fulfillment of the Old Testament teaching. Jesus said he did not come to abolish the law and the prophets but to fulfill them. Thus, the Old Testament teachings find their ultimate and final explanation and understanding in Jesus of Nazareth. We are to listen and learn and bend our understanding to Jesus and Scripture and not the other way around – even the harder sayings of Jesus. Why? Because of his sovereign authority and because he is never wrong. However, there is a word that summarizes everything that Jesus said and did and fulfilled – love. Love God. Love your neighbor. Love yourself. Love your enemies. Love indiscriminately but with priority to those in Christ.

Living with Christ: Fifth for creating an accurate and authentic discipleship culture is actualizing the comforting and encouraging promise of the presence of Jesus with us always. Jesus’ parting words are eternally comforting and encouraging. The One with sovereign authority is not going to abandon them to try and do this on their own. No. We have already said in baptism that disciples are united with Christ. Now Jesus makes it clear that he will not abandon his mission or his people until he comes back again bodily to make all things right forever. Then he will be physically present with us. Imagine that!!! Disciples of Jesus take seriously their call to “work out their salvation with fear and trembling for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.” Wow. How amazing is that?!? His presence assures our success and progress. We know from Philippians 1:6 that “God, who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.” This is our witness of Christ. That it is him working in me through the Holy Spirit, conforming more and more into the image and likeness of him as we strive to cooperate with him in our transformation through the obedience of faith. This fifth point is important because Christian Smith, 15 years ago clearly showed that the most common understanding of God was deistic in nature. That is, while he created the universe, he is not active in it. He is out there, distant and mostly disconnected. He is to be only engaged when something threatens my well-being as defined by Western Culture (safety, security, health, wealth, vocational success, comfort and material possessions and more). God is not an absentee landlord or father. He is present and he was present physically in Jesus of Nazareth and is now present through the Holy Spirit and promises to be again bodily present in the age to come after judging the living and the dead.



The authority of Christ. The mission of Christ. Putting on Christ. Living under Christ. Living with Christ. These all are necessary in our journey of discipleship and closing the gap between what we say we believe and what we live out in our words and actions on a daily basis. When we do this, we become credible and coherent witnesses of Jesus and his kingdom here on earth. When we do this, we fulfill our mission to make disciples of Jesus of Nazareth. May we do this well, striving with head and heart to make the most of every opportunity to be formed by the gospel so that we might live out the truths of the gospel as normative in our individual lives and our life with others, especially the Church – the body of Christ.

Communion Meditation

Professing: (Apostles Creed)

**We believe in God, the Father almighty, Creator of heaven and earth.
We believe in Jesus Christ, God’s only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
Born of the virgin Mary, Suffered under Pontius Pilate,
Was crucified, died, and was buried. He descended to the dead.
On the third day he rose and ascended to heaven
Where he is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come to judge the living and the dead.
We believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church,
The communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins,
The resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting.**

Proclaiming: 1 Corinthians 11:23b-25 (Paraphrased)

On the night of his betrayal, Jesus took bread, gave thanks and broke it saying, “this is my body given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.” After the meal he took the cup of wine and pouring it out said, “this wine is my blood, a new covenant of grace poured out for the forgiveness of sins.”

Remember and believe that the body & blood of Jesus was given & shed for the forgiveness of sins.

Song – Living Hope -- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9f2FXxDVO6w>

*How great the chasm that lay between us
How high the mountain I could not climb
In desperation, I turned to heaven
And spoke Your name into the night
Then through the darkness, Your loving-kindness
Tore through the shadows of my soul
The work is finished, the end is written
Jesus Christ, my living hope
Who could imagine so great a mercy?
What heart could fathom such boundless grace?
The God of ages stepped down from glory
To wear my sin and bear my shame
The cross has spoken, I am forgiven
The King of kings calls me His own*



*Beautiful Savior, I'm Yours forever
Jesus Christ, my living hope*

*Hallelujah, praise the One who set me free
Hallelujah, death has lost its grip on me
You have broken every chain
There's salvation in Your name
Jesus Christ, my living hope*

*Hallelujah, praise the One who set me free
Hallelujah, death has lost its grip on me
You have broken every chain
There's salvation in Your name
Jesus Christ, my living hope*

*Then came the morning that sealed the promise
Your buried body began to breathe
Out of the silence, the Roaring Lion
Declared the grave has no claim on me*

*Hallelujah, praise the One who set me free
Hallelujah, death has lost its grip on me
You have broken every chain
There's salvation in Your name
Jesus Christ, my living hope*

*Hallelujah, praise the One who set me free
Hallelujah, death has lost its grip on me
You have broken every chain
There's salvation in Your name
Jesus Christ, my living hope
Jesus Christ, my living hope*

Sending as Disciples of Jesus: Matthew 28:18-20 (Paraphrased)

I pray that we have hidden these following words deep into our hearts, our being, our identity as disciples of Jesus. May they continue to shape us more into the image and likeness of Jesus Christ and spur us toward making more and better disciples of Jesus of Nazareth – the one who reigns in authority and who is coming again to put all things to right forever!

All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Jesus. Therefore, as we are sent into the world by him, let us make disciples of all, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that Jesus has commanded us. And let us remember and treasure that Jesus is with us always, even to the end of the age. Amen!