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***Making Disciples***  
***Matthew 28:16-20***

*Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. 17 When they saw him, they **worshiped** him; but some **doubted**. 18 And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19 **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, 20 and **teaching** them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, **I am with you always, to the end of the age.**"*

***Today is Trinity Sunday.***

The Trinity is confusing and hard to understand.  
At the time Matthew wrote his Gospel,  
It was just a concept—coming from stories about the different persons of God at Jesus' baptism, and during his temptation.  
Over the years, theologians tried to come up with simple ways to describe the Trinity—like an apple—with a peel, a core, a seed.  
Or a tree—with a trunk, branches and leaves.  
But in reality, it's hard for ANYONE to understand.

***And if you are facing something difficult today,  
you probably don't care if you understand the Trinity, right?***

But what if it DID mean something?

What if it could help us—with whatever we are facing?

I mean, each person of the Trinity has a special role—***God the Father as Creator, Jesus the Son as Savior, Holy Spirit as our Counselor and Helper.***

***What if knowing each part of God could bring us real help, and hope?***

What names do you use for God in prayer? Father? Savior? Spirit?

And what ***image*** do you have of God?

Most scholars say that our earliest ideas of God come from our parents...

Which can obviously lead to problems depending on our role models.

It might explain why so many people see God as a harsh judge or taskmaster,

***But here, in this passage, we see a loving Jesus,  
We hear about the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,  
And we are assured that we are never alone.***

This passage is known as the Great Commission.  
 It happens after *the resurrection* of Jesus,  
 As the disciples gather on a mountain in Galilee...  
 And Jesus appears—as their resurrected Lord.

But, even with that spectacular sight—some of them *doubted!*  
 Which I think is *reassuring*—  
 that *doubt is a part of faith*.  
 And it's ok to doubt.  
 Jesus appears and gives them a big mission—  
*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 that I have commanded you*

What would you think, if Jesus *asked YOU to do this?*  
 Well, what if he is?  
 And what does he mean “*make disciples*”?  
 In Greek that phrase means *to teach*.  
 So, a disciple is a *student*.  
 In Jesus' day, a disciple would *give up their ordinary life*,  
 to travel and learn from their teacher!

Jesus is saying *go and TEACH—make STUDENTS* for me—  
 people who want to learn about me, follow me,  
 and have a relationship with me.

*But, this is not just something we 'have to do' as Christians,*  
 Or another obligation!  
 And it's not something for just door to door evangelizing and  
 'telling' people how to follow God.

*This is personal.*  
*And it's something we can ALL do.*  
 Not just Sunday school teachers or pastors or missionaries!  
 If it's a universal call it must be something *ALL of us can do, right?*

But, there's a step before this, isn't there?  
 To really make disciples, *don't we have to BE disciples first?*  
 So what if we have to ask ourselves: *are WE really disciples?*

Are we *true students* of Jesus?

I was reading in the *Art of Preaching* this week,  
About how dangerous it is when we always *identify with the teachers and leaders*  
in Bible stories.....

You know, the ones telling others what to do!

***That leads to arrogance.***

That's what has led civilizations to become imperialistic,  
Thinking WE have all the answers—that our faith, our language, our ideas  
are the ONLY ones that matter!

That's what Europeans did to Native Americans,  
And to slaves brought over from Africa!

They wanted to Christianize people—  
by changing their language, culture, and beliefs!

Native American children were often forced into boarding schools,  
where they were taught English and Christianity...and often abused.

***So we should be careful to not always identify as teachers, and leaders,***  
telling others how to act, believe and behave.

That's NOT what Jesus is saying!

Preston Sharpe, *The Art of Preaching*, Year A, Trinity Sunday, May 31, 2026.

***Before we can do any teaching, we must LEARN.***

And to learn, we must ***LISTEN***—to God, and to one another.

Making disciples can only come from ***BEING a disciple.***

***One motto of the Presbyterian church is:***

***reformed and always reforming***....we are people who learn and change and grow!

Which is good news, right?

But NOT EASY news.

***In fact, it's humbling to realize that we must RECEIVE***  
***before*** we can GIVE.

***We need a spirit of HUMILITY.***

Even Jesus had that humility—as the Son of God!

He said he was teaching what the Father had given him!

He was humble enough to wash the feet of his own disciples!

He told them that the last would be first, and the first would be last,

and we should follow his example of humble servant leadership.

***So, how are YOU growing as a disciple?***

How do you spend time in the *Bible*?

It's easier than ever before...it's on apps,  
There's every kind of Bible you can imagine,  
You can listen to it as you drive to work,  
It's literally available everywhere, at any time!

***And how is your PRAYER life?***

There is no 'right' way to pray---only the *need to pray!*  
Because prayer changes circumstances!  
And prayer changes US!

***How is your relationship with the church?***

How often do you worship?  
Or join in a Bible study?  
And or do different kinds of service?  
How do you share your time, and talents—inside and outside the church?

***There are SO MANY opportunities to serve---***

even next Sunday at our community picnic,  
when we welcome Nursery school families and the families we serve through the  
food pantry—so we can share fellowship, food and fun!

***As you think about BEING a disciple,***

Where does your discipleship need a "tune-up"?  
How might you need help?  
And have you asked God for that help?  
Or turned to friends in Christ?

Karl Greenfield, in an article called, "***Faking Cultural Literacy,***"  
argued that social media lets us pretend to know something about almost  
everything—even if our "knowledge" is deplorably shallow.

We tend to ***pick and choose*** little bits of information,  
share it with others, and think we know what's going on in the world.  
True, right?

Karl Taro Greenfield, "Faking Cultural Literacy," The New York Times (5-25-14)

***Don't we do this especially with social and political topics?  
Or certain terminology?***

But we don't take the time to really learn the history, meaning, or context.  
 Like, do we know the challenges of people *who are unhoused*?  
 Thankfully we have Judy Musa and HabCore coming at 11:30am today,  
 to help educate us!  
 Or, do we know what *Juneteenth* is all about?  
 Thankfully we can learn right here with food and music and fellowship,  
 At our June 19<sup>th</sup> celebration!

We need to *LEARN—how to learn.*  
*Not how to act like we already know.*  
 And when it comes to Jesus, we *REALLY do need to learn!*

We *don't want to PRETEND* to know Him,  
 We don't want to just scan Bible verses,  
 occasionally pop into worship,  
 And call it good....  
 We want to *BE true disciples!*  
 So, how can we become lifelong learners---following Jesus Christ?

Well, we have to admit that we'll *never* have all the *answers!*  
 We might actually have more *QUESTIONS!*  
 And that's great!  
 Remember how even some of his disciples doubted---  
 Questions and doubts are OK with Jesus!

Writer Ralph B. Smith once made an observation that  
*children* ask about *125 questions per day*  
 but adults ask only about *6 questions* per day...what's wrong with that picture?  
 Mark Batterson, *A Trip Around the Sun*, (Baker Books, 2015), pg. 163

How can we be *more curious, and more interested* in Jesus?  
*Jesus preached* by asking more *questions than offering answers.*  
*He told more parables and stories*, instead of telling people what to do!

What if we can and should *ask a lot more questions?!*  
 And even share doubts?  
 What if we *shared our stories*, more than telling others what to do?  
 What if we approached faith with *humility, and curiosity,*  
 And the willingness to *listen?*

Wouldn't that *help us build a relationship with Jesus,*  
 And one another?  
 And maybe... we can slowly  
*Start to MAKE new disciples....*  
*Only because we ARE disciples!*

Making disciples is not the same as making *church members.*  
 You can be a church member, and NOT be a disciple...  
 The goal is to have the *relationship,*  
 And be a *student of* Jesus,  
 Helping others do the same!

WE DON'T actually make disciples, that's God's job!  
 It's impossible for us to do it alone.....  
 But with *God all things are possible!*

We must *rely completely* on His power—  
 Which is why Jesus says here:  
*And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age."*

We cannot make disciples on our own,  
 But we can allow the *Holy Spirit to work through us,*  
 We can *teach*—  
*We can model* a life of faith.  
 We can *share* the good news,  
 by sharing our own faith stories, and even our doubts!

We definitely *can't assume* people will *absorb* faith by sitting in a pew!  
 We need to use our words and our lives!  
 But, God promises to give us the words we need,  
 And the opportunities to share!  
 And we *don't have to share 'religion'?*  
 We can share *what God has done in our lives!*

When was the last time you shared a *God-sighting* with someone?  
 Have you ever shared how *God got you through* a tough time?  
 Or what the church family means to you?  
 Those are things ANYONE can do!

Do you realize that *ACTORS often take their jobs more seriously* than we do for our 'job' as disciples?

For her role in *Black Swan*, *Natalie Portman* trained with New York City Ballet for eight hours a day, six days a week for 12 months!

For his role in *My Left Foot*, *Daniel Day-Lewis* interacted with disabled patients in Ireland, remained in a wheelchair and was spoon-fed and carried around!

For his role in *The Revenant*, *Leonardo DiCaprio* plunged in and out of icy rivers, ate raw buffalo meat.

To better imitate *Ray Charles*, *Jamie Foxx* wore prosthetic eyelids, learned how to play piano and lost 30 pounds in one week!

Emily Zemler, "15 Actors Who Went to Seriously Extreme Measures for a Role," February 5, 2016; <http://www.elle.com/culture/movies-tv/a33861/extreme-role-prep/>;

*What are WE doing to GROW our faith as disciples?*

And how are we *SHARING that faith?*

Hear the *Good News* of the Gospel today:

As disciples of Jesus, we have a *mission*—made possible by the Holy Spirit, working in us.

*May we BE true disciples, so we can help others do the same.*

And for this, all God's people can say together, Amen.