

WEEKLY DEVOTION – Tuesday, January 16, 2024
Pastor Bruce Kischnick, Grace Lutheran Church, New Albany, IN

“As You Are Going...”

READING: Matthew 28:16-20 – Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. When they saw him, they worshipped him; but some doubted. Then Jesus came to them and said, “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 end of the age.”

This passage is typically referred to as “The Great Commission”. It’s Jesus last command to his disciples regarding their work of evangelism, and through them, ours as well. As Apostles Jesus is sending them out – to Jerusalem, to all Judea, to Samaria, and to the ends of the world. They are to proclaim what they know, baptize those who repent and believe, and teach them the things that Jesus had taught them: to love one another, salvation by faith in Jesus alone, and the Good News of the Kingdom. At least that’s what we’ve always been taught, right? The Great Commission is Jesus’ last *command*. It’s an imperative phrase which means it’s an order, a directive...it’s a LAW. “Do this!”

But on reading a brand-new outreach and evangelism text the Discipleship Team is looking at I came across something I don’t recall reading before. It’s a literal interpretation of the Greek phrase that reads, “*As you are going...make disciples of all nations, baptizing them...*” I find that very interesting and very comforting.

We have all felt the guilt of that command, “Go...!” We wonder if we should be GO-ing to places like Africa or the Amazon to reach those who do not know the Good News. We feel we have failed if we haven’t been GO-ing house-to-house in our neighborhood to knock on doors and ask the residents, “Have you been saved?” We cringe a little inside whenever we hear those words and realize that we haven’t been very good about being Evangelists and GO-ing out into the world rounding up the lost. We just haven’t been GO-ing like the command says.

But if the better translation is “*As you are going...*” it points us to a very different understanding. The command then becomes less about a mission and more about a habit. We are not many of us equipped to do mission work in exotic and strange locales. We are not very effective if we stand in airports as the “Jesus Freaks” of the 1970’s did haranguing passers-by about their eternal futures. We won’t accomplish much as strangers banging on someone’s door and asking to share the Gospel. But if, as we go about our normal routines and encounter people in our normal relationships, we watch for and take advantage of those moments when someone is in need of God’s word, an encouragement to trust in Christ, a prayer and an assurance of God’s presence and love, we will be fulfilling the Great Commission and be more effective witnesses where we are.

“*As you are going...*” would make the Great Commission less a law and much more an invitation to take part in God’s gracious work of salvation. “*As you are going...*” then becomes less a chore and a “must do” and much more a natural extension of our joy in Jesus and his great love for us and the people we encounter in our normal walks of life. Every one of us comes in contact with people every single week. Some of them are hurting. Some of them are grieving. Some of them are burdened. Some of them are sad. Those are the very ones to whom we can be witnesses in the most natural and the most effective way by loving them and telling them what we know. In the end that’s exactly what witnesses do: they tell what they know to be true. And what we know to be true is that Jesus Christ loves sinners. He loves the hurting ones, the grieving ones, the burdened and the sad. He not only loves them, but he died for and rose again for them. When we

in the normal course of things, share his love with them and encourage them to trust his goodness, we will be fulfilling that Great Commission in the most meaningful and effective way.

So, *“As you are going...”* about your normal routines this week, be watching, be aware. You’ll have an opportunity to put in a good word for Jesus to someone who needs to hear that name. Rather than feeling guilty about not GO-ing out hunting down the lost, feel privileged and blessed to carry within you the love of Christ and simply let it overflow to those who don’t have it or to those who’ve been beaten down some by life and its problems. *“As you are going...”* let your faith in Jesus move you to care for, serve, and love those God has already placed along your path. And rejoice in the Lord. Amen.

PRAYER:

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

1) **CAMP COCONUTS** for children grades 4 and younger, along with their parents, is a family event offered by our Family Life Minister, Mitzi, on Friday, January 26 through the morning of the 27th. It’s an indoor camping event. Families can bring pop-up tents and actually put them up in classrooms and youth rooms around the building. There will be a variety of activities throughout the evening. After a late movie, everyone climbs into a sleeping bag, tired but happy. And, in the morning there will be breakfast. Then everybody can then go home.

2) **“PREPARING FOR THE JOURNEY HOME”** is a symposium being presented by the Discipleship Team on Saturday, January 27, 9:00-2:00. A variety of speakers will address legal, financial, and practical issues facing people as they age and enter their final years here on earth. Look for details on our Website and Facebook page. Sign up at or with the office.