



40A TRINITY BIBLE STUDY YEAR A

Worship and witness

Abstract

Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go.
When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted.
Matthew 28:16–18 (NIV)

Jim de Jong
jim@dejongs.id.au

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Worship and witness

SUNDAY, JUNE 7, 2020 | AFTER PENTECOST | HOLY TRINITY
YEAR A

<i>Old Testament</i>	Genesis 1:1–2:4a
<i>Psalm</i>	Psalm 8
<i>New Testament</i>	2 Corinthians 13:11–13
<i>Gospel</i>	Matthew 28:16–20

Jesus has summoned his disciples to a mountain in Galilee. He tells them that all authority is his and that they should make disciples all over the world, baptizing them and teaching them to obey his commandments. He promises to be with them always. W

This week's resources explore: being caught up in the life of God, and helping others to find that life.

Welcome and opening prayer

Gathering Prayer

All authority on heaven has been given to you,
You call us, you welcome us, we gather in your name,
Teach us, heal us, and inspire us,
Son of God, Loving Lord.
Amen.

A prayer of approach

O God, you are at the heart of creation.
Your word brings life into being;
your peace gives living its fulfilment;
your Spirit unites us into your Son.
We draw near, seeking your love in our hearts;
your wisdom in our minds; your power in our lives.
Receive us with grace, in the name of your Son.
Amen.

Introduction

Today it is easy to get caught up in the mystery that is the Trinity, but there is a deeper story here. The reading begins, ¹⁶ Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. ¹⁷ When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. (*Matthew 28:16–17 (NIV)*).

Rooted deeply in our faith is doubt, our doubt. Doubt that we are good enough, doubt that the answers to the questions of life are beyond our grasp, maybe even doubt that we are good enough for God to be asking us to be him in the society we live in, and doubt that he will walk with us. The hold that these doubts have on us will rule what we do.

The question is, how does God relate to these doubts, does he reject us because of them? does he smile when we overcome them?

The reading

Matthew 28:16–20 (NIV)

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

respond

For the word of the Lord

Thanks be to God

Bible Notes

Old Testament: Genesis 1.1–2.4a

This account of the beginning of the world unfolds in a simple yet mysterious pattern. So much is held within so few words. Creation happens as God speaks, and God’s words separate one thing from another, so that what was a formless void becomes a detailed and ordered space supporting the life of plants, animals and birds – every living creature that moves, of every kind, in the sea and on the land and in the air. Then God creates humankind and gives us ‘dominion’. It is to our shame that for so long we gave that word our own aggressive and masterful meaning, instead of taking our cue from the way that God is – speaking in order to curate the dimensions of the world, not separating things in order to control or destroy them but in order to foster life.

New Testament: 2 Corinthians 13.11-13

Paul expresses his affection for the Corinthian church, even given the arguments and mistrust there has been between them. He appeals to them to ‘put things in order’ – to sort out the broken relationships within the church where people have split into factions (1 Corinthians 1.11-12), and where they have condoned the breaking of marriage vows and indulged in greed and pride (1 Corinthians 5.9-11). He implies that much of this situation has been resolved, but he is anxious that relationships should be restored and that no one be scapegoated (2 Corinthians 2.5-8). He has expressed mixed feelings about the pain he has caused them by writing a harsh letter previously (2 Corinthians 7.8). He assures them, ‘I rejoice because I have complete confidence in you’ (2 Corinthians 7.16). And this investment in forgiveness and restoration forms the background to the familiar words of ‘the Grace’, as we are accustomed to call it, in verse 13. This is not simply an amiable thought for one another, something that can be prayed at the end of a meeting but requires no real investment of effort. This is a prayer that the grace, the love and the shared life of the Trinity itself would be with the Corinthians, as they do their level best to share these qualities in their life of faith together.

Gospel: Matthew 28.16-20

Jesus has summoned the disciples to this farewell meeting on a mountain in Galilee. The phrase ‘they worshipped him; but some doubted’ is a little misleading, as it suggests that some did one thing (worship), while others did another (doubt). The Greek words are both participles – that is, ‘worshipping’ and ‘doubting’ – so it could be that the same disciples are doing both actions. The words of Jesus that all authority has been given to him echo the kind of cosmic picture in passages

such as Daniel 7.13-14, yet the idea of authority itself has been comprehensively unpacked throughout Matthew's Gospel, whereby the power of Jesus to effect change is often contrasted unfavourably with the institutional authority of the Jewish leaders (Matthew 7.29; 9.5-6; 21.23; 23.3). The authority of Jesus is the real deal, conferred by God, who created the heavens and the earth and who can therefore grant this authority. It forms the firm foundation from which it is possible to go to all the nations. Matthew is often described as a Gospel with a narrowly Jewish focus, but here we see his wider concerns. It is Matthew who tells us about the Magi at the opening of his Gospel, and it is Matthew who gives us this command about 'all nations' at the end. Every ethnicity and culture is included. The strong verb in this command is not 'go' but 'make' – that is, 'in going and baptizing, make disciples'. The Trinitarian formula – 'of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit' – has become a very familiar part of our ritual, but in this context is surely saying something both universal and inclusive: the whole of God for the whole of the world. Equally, Jesus commands his disciples to pass on everything that he has taught them. The mission passes into their hands, and into ours.

The links between the lectionary readings

These readings share a focus on the importance of words – in creation, in reconciliation, in making new disciples. But the words are not to be empty; they become life-giving for the world when they derive their power from the very character of God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Picture pointer

- Does this scene look like something you could get 'caught up' in?
- What encourages you to become a witness to others?
- What is the most powerful experience of worship you have had?



End the session

A sending out prayer

May the grace of the Father be with you;
 may the love of the Son enfold you;
 and may the peace of the Spirit comfort you,
 today and always.

Amen.

Live your faith

Carry out three acts of 'faith sharing' this week. For example: offer a word of encouragement to someone you know; speak about your faith to a friend or family member; offer a gift to a charitable organisation.