***Matthew 28:16-20 (ESV)***

*“Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. [17] And 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] teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."*

**“Fullness Of God For A Sinful World”**

Blessed be the Holy Trinity and the undivided Unity. Let us give glory to him because he has shown mercy to us. Amen. A bittersweet moment takes place when buying stuff today. You know the experience. We get a great deal at the store. The product seems to work. Others are buying it as well. For some unknown reason, only later do we stumble upon the truth. It was on the back or bottom of the product. The words were always written right there. We read, “Made in China, Mexico, Korea” and whatever other countries. The awkward experience makes us look at other stuff only to end up with the same surprise. Some try to feel better about it all by touting the slogan “Buy American.” Except the fact remains, no one has enough time to check every little thing. Let alone, even having the label “American made” no longer means it is 100% American.

Living in a world of generic everything has lead us also to buy into a “generic” god. The text message tossed around of “OMG” is an empty calling upon God’s Name. It is no less foolish than believing “In God we trust” on the dollar bill exclusively means “The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.” On this Holy Trinity Sunday where we live in a nation that practices freedom of religion. We recognize how the true God of salvation is far from generic. Every year in catechism, it is never good enough for confirmands to give an answer of just “God.” God is awesome. God is good. God is great. God loves you. It all has meaning to Christians, but we assume God is the default word for the Holy Trinity. Not so much today, there are many generic gods in the world other than the One true God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The fullness of God revealed in Trinity is alone good news to save a sinful world.

The text from St. Matthew is what many have labeled as, “The Great Commission.” Some take it in broad terms about the whole church, but the attention focuses on Jesus sending out His apostles. These specially chosen men were the first to bring forth the Gospel in Spirit and in Truth. As St. Paul later states, “And God has appointed in the church first apostles…” (1 Cor. 12:28). They were set apart as firsthand witnesses to the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Of course, “The Great Commission” should really be entitled “The Great Comfort For Missions.” Those apostles had doubts about their whole experience as St. Matthew admits, “And when they saw him they worshiped him, but some doubted.” Even in His resurrected glory, faith in Christ still had fear. No wonder the witness by the Gospel according to St. Matthew does not end with his own words but has who speak? Jesus! It is upon word of the Savior where the apostles would proclaim the Triune God to the world.

Is it possible to believe in Jesus and not God as Trinity? Some would agree, you might have even had a couple of them knock at your door. Jehovah witnesses or Mormons add to and ignore the apostolic scriptures. The most important thing to identify with them is they are in no way, shape, or form Christian. First in discussion among our Lutheran Fathers is God as Trinity. They declare, “We steadfastly maintain that those who believe otherwise do not belong to the church of Christ but are idolaters and blasphemers” (Tappert 100:2). A generic Jesus comes knocking at the door. He is not the Son of God equal to the Father. Doubts arise because these are dedicated people. Yet, acts of love do not trump true faith in the Savior. When Jesus says, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.” It is not questioning His place in the Trinity. Jesus already had all authority as the Son. The great comfort is how He conquered all evil by His suffering and death on the cross. All authority in heaven and earth belongs to Jesus Christ. He reigns as both God and man within the Holy Trinity.

After comforting the apostles’ doubts over His authority, Jesus directs them to the place where God fully reveals His Name for a sinful world. He said, “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…” Nowhere else in all of Scripture is there a clearer statement of God’s Name or how He comes upon the lives of people. Jesus connects the Trinity to a particular place. It is in the Church where baptism joins us to God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. As one commentator writes, “Through the means of grace the Church is to do for all men what Jesus had done for the eleven” (Bul’s notes). Baptism is God completely giving Himself to save sinners at a particular time and place. The Father adopts us as His own children. The Son saves us as the Redeemer of sinners. The Spirit is alive within us as the Comfort to the saints. Baptism shows forth One God working as three persons bearing witness to the Holy Trinity.

As much as significant differences do exist among church bodies. What we can never forget is the loving Name of God is upon all the baptized. In other words, it is the catholic faith that binds us to the Triune God. When invoking the word “catholic” some overreact. Yet, it is the same as saying Christian. This does not promote a generic non-denominationalism, but the specific Faith as confessed in the Creeds. One thing we share as catholic/Christians is baptism into the Holy Trinity. God’s Name as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit frames the image for celebrating and defending the Gospel. The baptized are members of Christ’s Church by this good news poured upon our lives. We are not at war, but we do need to work at standing firm on what God gives by His Word and Sacraments. Nothing else be it reason or emotions will ever justify sinners. It is by faith in Jesus that we have salvation. Like the Psalmist, the baptized are to rejoice in the Triune God saying, “You make known to me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore” (Psalm 16:11).

Generic gods bring generic salvation to end up with generic teachings that give nothing. What Jesus gave His apostle was God’s specific Name in baptism along with the promise of “teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.” There is nothing more pleasing to the Father and the Spirit then faithfully proclaiming the Son. The divine service from beginning to end wraps us in the Trinity. Yet, the focus is on Jesus forgiving our sin, Jesus preaching His Word, Jesus giving His true body and blood. Everything in worship is to teach the baptized about God’s grace given in Jesus. Teach us what? What the Word says because the Word is Jesus. As Luther points out,

“Where you see people that do not know this, you should instruct them and also teach them how you learned, that is, how one through the good work and might of God is saved and comes from darkness into light”(The Church Comes from All Nations 20).

The apostles certainly had more doubts than we could ever have. However, they still went boldly forward with the Gospel. They even wrote the New Testament Scriptures so future Christians throughout the world would have no fear. St. Matthew gives the answer against all sin, death or devil by concluding His Gospel with Jesus declaring, “And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” It is the great I AM, YHWH, the fullness of God revealed in Trinity whose good news saves a sinful world. Amen, In the Name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, Amen.