

St. Andrews Lutheran Church, Tallebudgera

7<sup>th</sup> June 2020 – Trinity Sunday

**MATTHEW 28:16-20**

**SENT OUT IN GOD'S NAME**

What's in a name? Have a think about that. What does your name, and the names of other people, what significance do they have? Our name is about our identity, isn't it? If you know a person, as soon as their name is mentioned you will picture them, and the things you know about them might run quickly through your head. Our names are about reputation, and we don't want our 'name to be mud' as the old saying goes, so that every time our name is mentioned people think of stories about us which are embarrassing or even worse. Names can be used to call on each other; across a crowded room it is far easier to call 'Hey, Fred', than it is to call, 'Hey, fella with two eyes, brown hair, who talks funny, and who we all think is a bit weird but we put up with you anyway'. And names have power; we can 'drop' someone's name, and in some situations you can use the name of someone with influence to open doors or to get you things you want to get.

When I think about names in these ways, there are two occurrences from the Old Testament which tend to come straight to my mind. The first is the second commandment; don't take the name of the Lord your God in vain. We have this commandment, and it is right at the top of the list, because God's name has power, it is a name we can call on, and God's name sums up all He is and all He does. So, this commandment tells us to not do or say anything which causes people to think of this name, and therefore who God is, in a bad way.

The second incident I think of is when God, speaking from a burning bush in Exodus 3, tells Moses to go back to Egypt to free the Israelites from slavery. What does Moses say, 'Whom shall I say is sending me?' In other words, 'God, what *name* can I use for you so that they will know they need to do as I say?'

This importance of names, and their significance for us, brings us to Jesus' final farewell speech to His disciples, which we have here today in Matthew 28. Importantly, right in the middle

of this speech, Jesus gives the disciples God's name. But it's a bit different, because it's actually three names in one, what we now call the Trinity. Jesus says, 'Baptise them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit'. (19b) Note here that Jesus says the 'name'; it is singular. There might be three persons mentioned, but they come together under one name. In the first few hundred years of the Christian Church this understanding of God as the Trinity, three in one, was developed using Bible readings like this one here, the other readings we have today, and many other passages in the Bible also. So that today the baseline definition of the Christian church is this belief in the Trinity; Father, Son and Holy Spirit. One God, three persons. All three are God. All three have their separate roles, but all three work together.

Just like with our names, the name of God also says a lot about who He is and what He does.

Father: Creator, Preserver, Carer. The One who created all things and still cares for us today.

Son, the One we normally call Jesus: Saviour, friend, brother, God with us, God in human form. The One who gave up everything to come down from heaven to be born, live and die so that we can be forgiven and saved, and who now sits in glory at God's right hand to intercede on our behalf.

The Holy Spirit: Counsellor, Advocate, Guide. The One who now is with us to give us our faith and to help us to stay in this faith.

When we talk about the name of the Triune God, we are talking about who God is, the power God has, the love of God for us, and about all God has done, is doing, and will do in our lives.

But there is more to it than that here. As Jesus is giving this name of God to the disciples, He is also sending them out. Just like Moses was sent out when he had been given God's name, here Jesus is sending the disciples, and us, out also. Have a look at it, what does He say; ' <sup>19</sup> Go to the people of all nations and make them my disciples. Baptise them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, <sup>20</sup> and teach them to do everything I have told you.' (19-20) There are four parts to this sending, what are they: Go out, make them my disciples, Baptise in God's name, teach them. It's often called the Great Commission because it is a pretty big ask. And it is the Great Commission

because it is a command for us today just as much as it was for the disciples: Go out, make them my disciples, Baptise in God's name, teach them.

It is daunting. In all we do we are commanded to be witnesses to God's love, His forgiveness, His way of living, His call to follow Him. We might be tempted to think, 'Well, that kind of command may have been ok for the disciples. They were actually with Jesus so they must have had a much stronger faith than we do'. But think about that; not only do we have numerous stories of the disciples' struggling with their faith and understanding before Jesus died, but here, after they have seen the risen Jesus, we are told that still some doubted! God has given the task of taking the message of His love out to the world not to angels, or to perfect followers, but to normal human beings with all of their weaknesses and failings, that is, us.

And why does He do that? Firstly, because He sends us out in His name. Before He sends the disciples out Jesus says, 'I have been given all authority in heaven and on earth!' (18b). If you want a name you can use to get things to happen, this is the ultimate one! It's the name of the God who made the heavens and the earth just by His command. The power of the name Jesus used to still the storms, heal the sick, raise the dead, feed the hungry, forgive sins. The name we wear as 'Christians'. The name we pray to, the name we trust in, the name we now go out in.

If we find Jesus' command daunting, and we probably do, have a look at how His sending out ends, 'I will be with you always, even until the end of the world.' (20b) Right back at the beginning of Matthew's account of Jesus' life on earth, Jesus was given the name "Immanuel", which means, "God with us" (Mt. 1:23). Now, here at the end, Jesus promises to be with us always, a reference to the coming of the Holy Spirit who now remains with us always. Whatever we go through in our lives, however we struggle with this task He has given us, we can trust the promise of God that He is with us always.

As much as our names are important for us, the name of God is so much more important. In this name Jesus gives us here we come to know God as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; the Holy Trinity, and all that means and involves. It's the name that helps us to know of God's love, care, and

forgiveness in all we go through. It's the love we are called to take out so others can call on it also. Go out: in the power and love of the Father, the obedience and forgiveness of the Son, and the faith and guidance of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

**Prayer:** Lord God, we thank you that you have revealed yourself to us as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Be with us, strengthen us and guide as we seek to take your name out into our world. Amen.

### **FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION AND REFLECTION**

#### **What's In A Name?**

- Talk a bit more about the significance of names for us? Have you ever been able to use a 'name' which has opened doors for you? Do you have any examples of when either your name or the name of someone else was tarnished?
- What do you think of when you hear or think of the name of God: Father, Son, Holy Spirit? Is there an image that comes to mind, a thought, a feeling?
- What does it mean to you that you were baptised into the name of God, and that you can call on it at any time?

#### **Go Out!**

Jesus gives the disciples, and us, a daunting task here; to go out and bring others to know and follow Him.

- What comfort and encouragement do you find in this reading as Jesus commands us to go out in His name?
- Think about the ways you are already carrying out this call from Jesus to go out. Thank God for how He is already working through you, and ask for His help to continue to do these things.
- Are there other opportunities, situations etc God has placed before you in which you can help others to know Him? Are there gifts He has given you that you can use in this work? Pray for God's guidance, strength and encouragement to further develop you in taking His love out.

#### **I Am With You Always?**

The name Jesus was given at the beginning of Matthew's Gospel, and the promise Jesus makes to us all at the end, reminds us that God is with us always.

- What does it mean to you to know that God is always with you?
- Do you sometimes struggle with this, eg, when you are going through a hard time, or your faith is under threat for whatever reason?
- Pray for God to help you by His power, and through His Word, your Baptism and Holy Communion, to always know that He is with you at all times and in all things.

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