

Week of Trinity Sunday – Year A – June 22, 2011- Homily
Genesis 1:1-2:4a; Psalm 8; 2 Corinthians 13:11-13; Matthew 28: 16-20
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The Book of Daniel (7:14) – the real Book of Daniel, not the four episode flop of a TV series that aired on NBC a few years ago – contains these words, “And to him was given the dominion, and the honour, and the kingdom; and all nations, tribes, and languages, shall serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom shall not be destroyed.” It’s quite likely that this is the Old Testament inspiration for a portion of tonight’s Gospel reading concerning the “one like a Son of Man” and His dominion, His power and authority, especially over all the nations of the world. This portion comes from a scene in Daniel that reads like the end times described vividly in the Revelation to John. As Christians, we consider the fulfillment of Daniel’s prophetic words to be in the person, life, teaching, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, our Lord. This last section of Matthew’s Gospel is also known as The Great Commission.

It begins with an appearance of the risen Lord on a mountain. That’s a huge clue that something important is about to happen. Biblically, a mountain setting usually presages highly significant divine-human interactions or theophanys. Consider the giving of the Ten Commandments by God the Father to Moses on Mt. Sinai, as well as Jesus’ mountain top transfiguration in the presence of Peter, James and John. There are only eleven disciples present, because of Judas’ betrayal and death. Picture this. The congregation is eleven, down from twelve the week before! Yet the risen Lord is entirely unperturbed, and completely confident in this little band of disciples to carry out the mission He is about to give them. The key is Jesus. He confidently proclaims that all authority has been given to Him, and He is empowering the disciples with that same authority. That’s you and I. We’re empowered to heal, proclaim the Good News, teach, and make new disciples of others, through our relationship with Christ and in the power of the Holy Spirit.

The response of the disciples, noted in Matthew’s Gospel, really takes us by surprise, but it is also deeply comforting, “When they saw him, they worshipped him; but some doubted.” It’s not surprising that the disciples worshipped Jesus. They’ve been with Him throughout His ministry, listening to His teachings, witnessing His miracles, His death, and His resurrection. From the beginning of Matthew’s Gospel, the element of paying homage to the Lord, bowing down in His presence, and worshipping Him, is a theme of the Gospel. Paying homage to the baby Jesus is the first thing the wise men from the East do when they find Him with Mary. In so doing they express Jesus’ authority over them, even though He’s still a vulnerable baby. As we say in our Eucharistic prayer, “it is right, and a good and joyful thing, always and everywhere to give thanks” to God and to praise God. As the Word made flesh, there’s no doubt in Matthew’s mind that Jesus is worthy of our praise and worship.

Now let’s be as honest as Matthew is. When we gather together in community to worship the Lord, we come as we are. That means we come with our doubts and our questions. We come to God with our cares and worries. We come with joy, and we come with sadness. We come with thanksgivings for prayers answered, or deep misgivings for continued suffering or pain. We’re human, and Matthew’s message here is incredibly comforting. God wants us to come just as we are, with or without our doubts and questions, and all the stuff we carry through our lives. God

loves us, just as we are. God meets us here tonight just as we are. And God the Son tells us that He has been given all authority in heaven and on earth. With the blessing of free will, we come together tonight to worship the Lord and offer ourselves and all that baggage to the One in Whom God has vested all authority in heaven and on earth. We're not paying homage to a worthless idol or a fake god who promises something that he or she can't possibly deliver. We're offering ourselves to the only One who can give us healing and salvation, who can comfort us and deliver us from all evil. God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit who promises to remain with us "always, to the end of the age." Now that's what I call comforting, as well as highly news worthy!

Emmanuel, meaning "God with us" is also part of Matthew's Gospel from the very beginning. One of the earliest passages is when Mary accepts the burden and responsibility of bearing the Son of God in fulfillment of Isaiah's prophetic words. These final words of Matthew sum up the hope and the promise of Jesus' mission to the world, to be continued by the disciples making disciples. We have to notice the close link between Jesus' Great Commission to the disciples and the fact that He promises to be with us to the end of the ages. In other words, Jesus knows that we cannot fulfill His commission on our own, or by our own strength, but only in and through Him as disciples. Our power and authority to do the work God has given us to do rests in Christ. The obvious question is "okay God, but how do we actually do what you want us to do?" Like most of the folks that God empowers throughout Scripture, we demure, we make excuses, we're suddenly filled with false humility, and doubts. Even the great Moses initially said "no" to God, and said he couldn't possibly do what he was being asked to do for all kinds of reasons. We tell ourselves that we don't know enough to share the Good News; we harbor fears of rejection or even a hostile response. We don't want to be labeled as one of those pushy evangelists. What we really lack is trust that God will give us the words, and the opportunity to share with others through our faith in action. Every single person in this room tonight, and in this entire faith community can and does share the Good News, some of us more openly than others. You have a story to tell of how God in Christ has made a difference in your life. You are empowered to tell it. Your story is unique, and no one can tell it like you. Trust God. Trust yourself. Share the hope in Christ that sustains you. Martin Luther once said, "Everything that is done in the world is done by hope." If we think about this in light of Matthew's Gospel, since God the Father has given all authority in heaven and earth to Christ, and Christ is our hope, then everything in the world really is done by hope. I'd add, "done by hope" in the power of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Our hope in Christ has endured for more than two thousand years and will always endure even to the end of the ages. We're not trying to sell another crummy TV sit-com or the latest self-help technique. We're disciples of Jesus Christ, stewards of God's gift of life, healing, and hope. I think the world needs God's life, healing and hope even more than ever, don't you?

Amen.