

Sermon for May 31, 2026 – Holy Trinity

Matthew 28:16-20 EHV

Theme: The Trinity backs your witness of Him with

- 1) Divine Power,
- 2) A Divine Program.
- 3) A Divine Promise.

¹⁶The eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had directed them. ¹⁷When they saw him, they worshipped him, but some hesitated because they were uncertain. ¹⁸Jesus approached and spoke to them saying, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹Therefore go and gather disciples from all nations by baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰and by teaching them to keep all the instructions I have given you. And surely I am with you always until the end of the age.”

I remember answering my doorbell one Sunday afternoon to a young boy, handsomely dressed in a suit and tie, and his mother in her Sunday best. The child offered me a magazine and asked if we could talk. My heart sank as I read the title: “Is Jesus God?”

I invited them in for a chat in my living room. After we were seated, the 10-year-old boy proceeded to answer the question headlining the magazine. According to him and his mother: Jesus is not God.

If you hadn't guessed it already, the young lad and his mother were Jehovah's Witnesses. Like the ancient Arians, whose false doctrines were condemned in the Nicene and Athanasian creeds, Jehovah's Witnesses deny both the Trinity and Jesus' divinity. In doing so, they cut themselves off from the salvation God wants them to have in His Son. My heart grieved for them because, apart from faith in the true Christ, they remained under God's righteous wrath and condemnation.

After the boy finished talking, I did my best to show them from Scripture who Jesus really is, so that they might know the truth and be saved. Sadly, a car horn honked shortly after I started. The mother said it was her husband. They had to go. I urged them to return for another chat, but they never did.

As I watched their car drive away, I became frustrated with myself: This young boy and his mother were willing to give up a Sunday afternoon to go door to door for a soul-destroying belief, while I sat in my living room with God's saving truth!

Brothers and sisters in Christ, do you realize how blessed we are? The Holy Spirit has graciously revealed the truth to us in the Bible about who Jesus is and what He has done to reconcile us to the Father. He has given us a knowledge that saves souls from hell and offers heaven to all who believe.

So, what are we doing with that gift? Are we willing to share with our family and friends the truth about who Jesus is and what he has done to save them with as much vigour as we would tell them about our favourite hobby? Or do we let the fear of rejection, or doubt that people will believe us, keep us from witnessing?

Our actions betray our attitudes, don't they? So, where can we find the strength to overcome our doubts and fears to witness Jesus? We find it in the promises Jesus gave His disciples on a mountain in Galilee.

With the last verses of Matthew's Gospel as our guide, let us learn how **the Trinity backs our witness of Him with**

- 1) Divine Power,
- 2) A Divine Program,
- 3) A Divine Promise.

Part One: With Divine Power

Our text marks at least the fourth time Jesus spoke with His disciples after His resurrection. Fulfilling the instructions Jesus gave through the women who were the first to see Jesus alive,ⁱ

¹⁶The eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had directed them.

¹⁷When they saw him, they worshipped him, but some hesitated because they were uncertain.

We understand why the eleven worshipped Jesus when they saw Him. His resurrection proved He is the Messiah. But why were some "hesitant" and "uncertain"?

They wavered – not because they didn't believe Jesus was alive. He obviously was! They wavered because they had doubts about their role in His kingdom. Did Jesus still want them to proclaim His Gospel to the people of this world when, just days earlier, His own people handed Him over to the Gentiles for crucifixion? Jesus' betrayal, trial, and crucifixion revealed what they would be up against in the world.

Yes, the disciples revealed themselves to be a lot like us – rejoicing in Jesus on the one hand, but wavering on the other. The world is an evil place, and every human heart is filled with wickedness – including their own. How could they, a band of only eleven men, overcome such obstacles?

Knowing both their and our struggles with such doubt,

¹⁸Jesus approached and spoke to them saying, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.

Note well what Jesus is saying: He was not just given some authority over this earth. He was given all authority over every aspect of creation.

Just as God created the universe by speaking it into existence, so can Jesus. Just as the LORD changed the laws of physics to get the sun to stand still on a day of battle,ⁱⁱ so can Jesus. Just as the LORD humbles proud leaders, nations, and every power of hell, so can Jesus. And, most importantly to our witness, just as the LORD can raise the spiritually dead to spiritual life – creating faith in even the most hardened enemy of the Gospel, so does Jesus.ⁱⁱⁱ

“But,” you might ask, “How can this man Jesus possess such divine power?” Jesus explains that it was “given” to Him. By whom? By His divine nature, which existed in intimate union with the Father and the Holy Spirit from eternity.

Jesus was born into this world in all humility – meaning that He did not make full use of this divine power for Himself during his earthly ministry. Now that He has completed His work of atoning for our sins, His divine nature communicated all its attributes to His human nature so that it can do things only the divine can do.

Think of it this way. Even though a piece of steel has no magnetic properties on its own, when a magnet unites with it, the steel exhibits magnetic properties so that what could be said of the magnet can also be said of the steel, since they are joined.

In a union far more mysterious, marvellous, and permanent, Jesus’ divine nature communicates its properties to His human nature so that what can be said of the divine can be said of the human. It’s not just Jesus’ divine nature that is all-present, all-powerful, and all-knowing; all of Jesus (both his human and divine nature) possesses these properties because all authority has been given to Him.

What practical comfort is there in this for us? We are not facing the world’s hostility on our own. Jesus, the one we represent, has all authority in heaven and on earth. As the LORD empowered Moses with the gifts necessary to fulfil his duty when he doubted, so the LORD stands ready to empower us. No matter how intimidating Satan and his allies might seem, Jesus not only has all authority to accomplish His will through us, He uses that authority to fulfil the divine plan the Father devised with the Holy Spirit and Him before the creation of the world – a plan that involves us, as Jesus explains next.

Part Two: A Divine Program

¹⁹Therefore go and gather disciples from all nations

Where were the disciples to go? Wherever the LORD would lead them – near or far. For what purpose? To use the tools He would give them to gather believers from all nations.

Jesus didn't just want them to reach out to the people who looked and talked like them, but to all people – even those they might naturally fear or avoid. The book of Acts records them witnessing to Roman soldiers, African officials, powerful governors, and even people who dabbled in the occult.^{iv} Men and women, young and old, Jew and Gentile, emperor and slave – no one was to be excluded from their labour.

And no one is to be excluded from our labour either. The LORD doesn't just want us to share the Gospel with the people who look like us, talk like us, or share our political beliefs. No, he wants us to gather disciples for Him from all nations – from conservatives and liberals, Muslims and atheists, those who are proudly “woke” and those who are strongly “anti-woke,” the highly educated and the very simple... Because our Triune God created and redeemed all people, He wants us to reach out with His Gospel to all people – not excluding anyone because of who they are, what they have done, or what they currently believe.

But how do we do that? Some people exhibit such vile hatred of everything Christian. How do we gather disciples from people who are proud of living in ways that contradict what the Bible teaches? How do we reach out to people who threaten violence against anyone who teaches anything different from what they believe? How do we reach out to our friends and family members who think we're crazy to believe in Jesus like we do?

Jesus tells us:

By baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,²⁰ and by teaching them to keep all the instructions I have given you.

The Word and Sacraments are the tools God gave us to gather disciples from all nations.

For children, we baptize first – trusting in God's promise that through Baptism He saves a child by connecting him to Christ's death and resurrection.^v God the Father grants the child a new birth by pouring out His Spirit upon him, clothing him in Christ's righteousness, and declaring him to be His son.^{vi}

With adults, we proclaim God's Word before baptism. Speaking the truth in love,^{vii} we use God's law to expose their sin and reveal the hell they deserve because of it, so people might fear God's wrath and confess their need for a Saviour. Then we proclaim the truth of who Jesus is and what He did to save them. Through that message, the Holy Spirit works a change in a person's heart – creating faith where there was none. That Spirit-worked faith now clings to Christ and His promises, moving the new believer to desire Holy Baptism and live as God's child on earth.^{viii}

And when a person is baptized into the name of our Triune God, he belongs to the LORD. Our Triune God makes it His responsibility to protect him, educate him, and strengthen his faith. The Father does that by sending the Spirit, who constantly directs our attention to Jesus through Holy Scripture. The Son and the Spirit intercede to the Father on behalf of the believer in accordance with the Father's will. And the Father acts on behalf of the believer through His

Son and Spirit – protecting you throughout your life to deliver you safely into His heavenly kingdom.^{ix}

This is the plan Jesus has for his disciples – for us. He wants us to use His Word and Sacraments to gather people from every nation – trusting His promise that He will work through these means of grace to accomplish His will. He will change the hearts of His elect from unbelief to faith as He gathers them through our witness of Him, just as He changed ours.

Therefore, you don't have to be afraid of witnessing Jesus – doubting people will believe you. The Trinity backs your witness of Him with His divine power and plan. And He also gives you a divine promise.

Part Three: A Divine Promise.

And surely I am with you always until the end of the age.

Even though you cannot see Jesus with your eyes as the disciples once did, your Triune God remains with you.

He is with you, having claimed and adopted you at your Baptism as His own. He is with you in Holy Communion – offering you the very body and blood He used to win your forgiveness. He is with you in Bible study – guiding you to see Jesus on every page. He is with you in life, promising to make your very body His home.^x

The LORD is always with you – warning you when you stray, picking you up when you fall, and forgiving you as you turn to Him in repentance. He promises that nothing in all creation can ever separate you from the love He has for you in His Son.^{xi}

Because Jesus was forsaken for your sins while on the cross, God the Father will never forsake you as you cling to him in faith.

Even when the entire world seems against you and you feel abandoned, know that your Triune God remains with you, upholding you with His almighty power. He is with you whenever you tell other people about Him – powerfully working through His Word on the hearts of all who hear you.

And what a comfort this is for us: instead of focusing on our fears, we can focus on Christ - His death that took away the sins of the world, His resurrection that announced our reconciliation, and His promise to be with us as we share His Gospel truth in love. Instead of being afraid of the world, our Triune God's power, program, and promise move us to have the same compassion toward the world that He has for us. They move us to want to witness Him, even when our sinful flesh fights against it.

We want to witness Christ – not merely because He commands it, but because, as the apostle Paul states:

For the love of Christ compels us, because we came to this conclusion: One died for all; therefore, all died. And he died for all, so that those who live would no longer live for themselves but for him, who died in their place and was raised again.^{xii}

I don't know what happened to that young boy and His mother after they left. On the one hand, I felt bad that I didn't have more time to tell them about Christ. On the other hand, I know that I am not the only one God has commissioned and equipped to share His saving name in the world. Every Christian that boy and his mother encounters will have an opportunity to witness Christ to them – through whom our Triune God promises to powerfully work His will.

Yes, the more we reflect on who our Triune God is and the gracious promises He offers in His Word, the less we fear the world and the more emboldened we become to share His Gospel with others. Therefore, whenever you are tempted to stifle your witness of Christ out of fear or doubt, remember our sermon text and how the Trinity backs your witness of Him with divine power, a divine program, and a divine promise.

May these truths move you to boldly speak the truth in love to everyone God puts in your life. Amen.

ⁱ Cf. Matthew 28:7, Mark 16:7

ⁱⁱ Cf. Joshua 10:13

ⁱⁱⁱ 1 Timothy 1:12-17

^{iv} Cf. Acts 8:26ff, Acts 19:19, Acts 16:25ff

^v Cf. Acts 3:28-29; 1 Peter 3:21, Romans 6:4, Colossians 2:12

^{vi} Cf. John 3:5-6, Titus 3:5-7, Galatians 3:26

^{vii} Cf. Ephesians 4:15

^{viii} Cf. Acts 8:35-38

^{ix} 2 Timothy 4:18

^x Cf. 2 Corinthians 6:9-10

^{xi} Cf. Romans 8:38-39

^{xii} 2 Corinthians 5:14-15 EHV