Trinity Sunday, Zion Church Rathgar June 7th 2020

Reading: St Matthew 28.16-20

St Matthew 29.19: *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, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you.*

The account of creation from the first chapter of Genesis speaks confidently of original goodness. We associate this long and majestic Reading with Creation Sunday and with The Easter Vigil. It is refreshing to see both Genesis 1 and Isaiah chapter 40 as part of the weave of Trinity Sunday. On Trinity Sunday, we are often *lost in wonder, love and praise* and equally lost in something that seems incomprehensible: the doctrine of The Trinity. While it would be quite inappropriate not to draw our attention to the ways in which the expression of the doctrine of The Trinity consumed much of the time and energy of some of the most acute theological minds of the early centuries of the undivided Christian church, it is also important for us to see how we might today live a Trinitarian life.

The final verses of St Matthew’s Gospel take us forward from the idea of Gospel as biography of Jesus on earth to Gospel as a living document in the life of one of the earliest churches. Clearly the church for whose members St Matthew wrote had a strong sense of the ascending Jesus as, in fact, being God. After all, the disciples are said to have worshipped him and he himself says that all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to him. Jesus is already an integral and regular part of the God they worship. For them to accept that everything they do is in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit follows from this.

We celebrate Trinity Sunday in a time of continuing restrictions of gathering and of movement. This ought not to dull our hearts and our minds to the energy and dynamism of Trinity Sunday and of the community addressed by St Matthew. They are invited and commissioned to go to all nations and to make disciples. *Mission* – the central idea of being sent – which was the very reason Jesus came to earth in the first place is now passed on directly to them as a treasure and an activity. They are to be the church of sending to bring a full living picture of Jesus Christ to assist with the formation and the sustaining of communities worldwide. *Baptism* – this is the way by which one - anyone - enters into this church as envisaged and envisioned by St Matthew. And this church is a response to the on-going presence of God in the world, informed as it is by the earthly life of Jesus Christ. This baptism is in Christ, as St Paul was to express it; it is also confidently in the name of the Father, of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. For us who can all too easily forget our baptism, or associate it solely with little children, we would do well in these days when time is more readily in our hands to read for ourselves the Baptismal Service from the viewpoint of our now experienced faith and life of faith. For example, what is now meant by the contrast between light and darkness, between good and evil in the form of our social action, our renewed appreciation of ecology, our economic self-understanding? The third component is *Teaching* those whom they, and we, as disciples meet as we encounter them and engage with them. We are asked to invite them to obey everything that Jesus has commanded us. They are, frankly, unlikely to obey anything or anyone if we do not ourselves model what is The New Commandment. We would be wise to look no further than the Gospel of Matthew for this. The Jesus whom we meet in St Matthew is a fierce exponent of Jesus as the new Teacher and the new Law Giver. Jesus is The New Moses – after all he teaches on a mountain for three whole chapters.

*All I have commanded you* is: what? Well certainly something that is common to Law and Gospel is the commandment to love God and love neighbour as you love yourself. The Jesus of St Matthew is a majestic exponent of this ethic of humanity and divinity working it out together. This summary serves us well as we have found ourselves forced to combine our Christian discipleship with our civic duty in strange and straining times. The Sermon of the Mount itself is part of the new commandment of Jesus; it weaves into the expression of blessing and blessedness a wide range of people who have long been excluded from holiness as well as from blessing. The Last Judgement as told in chapter 25 is another point of interest as we seek this teaching and obedience combined. As we read it, we see that those who don’t even know that they are doing acts of kindness are recognized and their judgement is reward; while those who really did not see the need before their eyes find themselves having done wrong. The teaching on judgement here is important because the parable (it is not after all Breaking News) comes ahead of the Crucifixion as the story unfolds in St Matthew. The judgement of the parable can be overturned. There is time to change behaviour. That time, that response is now. Neglect can be redeemed here on earth.

In this way The Great Commission loses none of its greatness nor indeed of its commissioning. What is different and what is a changed focus is that it is not a Biblically authorized licence for ecclesiastical expansion, whatever the human, cultural and societal damage, as it has so often been used. This is not to say that conversion is a bad thing: quite the opposite! It is to say that it is not an entitlement in a power struggle where the dominant party plays by its own rules.

Trinity Sunday: why or what does it matter?

Trinity Sunday recognizes and reads in Scripture and in church teaching the three theologically authorized ways in which we observe and experience God to operate. It facilitates and encourages us to read our own experiences in light of this discernment. Every time we say The Grace together and every time we give or receive The Blessing, the God who is three in one and one in three is called down in God’s fullness on us and on those for whom we seek blessing. This is The Trinity at the heart of our daily life.

St Paul 13.13: *The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with all of you.*