

From the Pews, Phil Gehman

Perhaps it seems ironic that our Scripture this morning is known as the Great Commission. Right now, the primary feeling for many of us is that we've actually been decommissioned, like a lighthouse taken out of service with the arrival of GPS technology.

There are many individual reasons why we may feel this way:

- Employment that gave meaning and structure to our lives as well as put food on the table and a roof over our heads has vanished.
- Our hope for the future has been severely compromised by our past failures to respond meaningfully and powerfully to prejudice, brutality, and inequality.
- As social creatures, we find ourselves cut off from family and friends living lives of isolation, vulnerability and loneliness, even when we're out in public doing our best Lone Ranger impersonations.
- We've discovered that it feels unnaturally difficult to be the Body of Christ when members are not connected to each other in tangible ways.
- A hostile virus that is no respecter of persons is creating devastation, pain and death throughout the entire human community, leaving sorrow and anguish in its wake.

One could go on and on with examples of the ways our lives appear to be decommissioned at the present moment. Indeed, we are on the threshold of a new life together and feel inadequate to face whatever it has in store for us. This is a traumatic, stressful place to be in, that's for certain.

But before we get too morose about it all, let's look again at this morning's Scripture. The disciples, too, were crossing the threshold into an unknown, uncertain future without their leader. And if that weren't scary enough, Jesus commanded them to "make disciples, baptize and teach" in his name throughout the whole world. How's that for a daunting task for the provincial band of early disciples? How in the world could they pull it off? No wonder "some doubted."

Note the bookend verses for the Great Commission. Before Jesus gave it to them, he said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me." And after he had given it, he promised, "I am with you always, to the end of the age." What shall we make of these words? They remind us that the fulfillment of the Great Commission is not dependent on our abilities and particular circumstances. We need not take Jesus to an indifferent or hostile world, lamenting that it's been left to us to create the Kingdom of God all by ourselves.

Rather, we go into the world to join Jesus there where he has already been working long before we ever appeared on the scene. As we do so, we Easter people remember that he has already triumphed over the forces of darkness, disease, evil and death. We can go thankfully, confidently, and joyfully, grateful that Jesus invites each of us to participate in his ministry and goes with us each step of the way. What astounding Good News this is!



Prayer of Preparation

"There is no time for despair,
no place for self-pity,
no need for silence, no room for fear.
We speak, we write, we do language.
That is how civilizations heal."
—Toni Morrison

Gathering and Preparing for God's Word

Prelude *Holy, Holy, Holy* Kelsey
Welcome and Announcements

Sentences of Scripture, *Micah 6:6-8*
With what shall we come before the Holy One,
and bow ourselves before God on high?
God has shown us what is good.

What does the Holy One require of us,
but to do justice,
and to love kindness,
and to walk humbly with our God?

Hymn #1 *Holy, Holy, Holy* NICAEA
See hymn sheet.

Prayer of Confession & Assurance of Pardon
Gracious God,
the sin we carry weighs on us and disrupts your peace.
No longer can we ignore the thorns of suspicion
and the roots of segregation that we have allowed to penetrate our world.
You created us in the divine image, in all its diversity and dimension,
each of us bears your likeness.
But too often we fail to recognize the spark of divinity
in the eyes of our siblings. Forgive us. Call us to recognition.
From abundance you created a world of abundance,
that we might serve one another and protect your creation.
Yet we hoard resources for ourselves, afraid that sharing your resources
will deplete our own. Forgive us.
Open our eyes to distinguish good from evil.
Open our hearts to the needs of our neighbors.
Strengthen our wills to choose peace and advocate justice.
Turn us toward your world, and make us a model of the Beloved Community
which you have inaugurated in Christ Jesus. Amen.

Hearing God's Word

Prayer for Illumination
Epistle Lesson, *II Corinthians 5:17-19*
Time for Children
Gospel Lesson, *Matthew 28:16-20*
Homily "What's Our Assignment?"
Duet *Blest Are They* Haas

Responding to God's Word

Affirmation of Faith, from *The Confession of 1967*
The reconciling work of Jesus was the supreme crisis
in the life of humankind.
His cross and resurrection become personal crisis and present hope
for women and men when the gospel is proclaimed and believed.
In this experience, the Spirit brings God's forgiveness to all,
moves people to respond in faith, repentance, and obedience,
and initiates the new life in Christ.

The new life takes shape in a community
in which people know that God loves and accepts them
in spite of what they are.
They therefore accept themselves and love others,
knowing that no one has any ground on which to stand,
except God's grace.

Morning Prayers
The Lord's Prayer
**Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name,
thy kingdom come, thy will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our debts
as we forgive our debtors; and lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever.**

Hymn #372 *O For A World* AZMON
See hymn sheet.

Charge and Benediction
Postlude *Praise to the Lord, the Almighty* Walther

Leading Worship this Morning

Ben Dorr, *preaching*
Mary Kathleen Duncan, Lauren Slingerland, Leigh Stuckey, *liturgists*
Nancy Smith, *organist*
Diana Dailey, Katie Knauer, *soloists*

O for a World 372

1 O for a world where ev - ery - one re - spects each oth - er's ways,
 2 O for a world where goods are shared and mis - er - y re - lieved,
 3 We wel - come one world fam - i - ly and strug - gle with each choice
 4 The poor are rich; the weak are strong; the fool - ish ones are wise.
 5 O for a world pre - par - ing for God's glo - rious reign of peace,

where love is lived and all is done with jus - tice and with praise.
 where truth is spo - ken, chil - dren spared, e - qual - i - ty a - chieved.
 that o - pens us to u - ni - ty and gives our vi - sion voice.
 Tell all who mourn: out - casts be - long, who per - ish - es will rise.
 where time and tears will be no more, and all but love will cease.

Everything longed for in this text is a reminder of how far our present world is from what God wants. Yet this is not just wishful thinking; it is a call to action, a summons to participate in the fulfillment of God's desire for all earth's people to live in radical *shalom*.

TEXT: Miriam Therese Winter, 1987
 MUSIC: Carl Gottlieb Gläser, 1828; arr. Lowell Mason, 1839
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AZMON
 CM

THE TRIUNE GOD

1 Holy, Holy, Holy! Lord God Almighty!

Descant

4 Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly,

1 Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly! Lord God Al - might - y!
 2 Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly! all the saints a - dore thee,
 3 Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly! though the dark - ness hide thee,
 4 Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly! Lord God Al - might - y!

ho - ly,

Ear - ly in the morn - ing our song shall rise to thee.
 cast - ing down their gold - en crowns a - round the glass - y sea;
 though the eye of sin - ful - ness thy glo - ry may not see,
 All thy works shall praise thy name, in earth and sky and sea.

THE TRIUNE GOD

ho - ly,

Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly! mer - ci - ful and might - y!
 cher - u - bim and ser - a - phim fall - ing down be - fore thee,
 on - ly thou art ho - ly; there is none be - side thee,
 Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly! mer - ci - ful and might - y!

God in three per - sons, bless - ed Trin - i - ty.

God in three per - sons, bless - ed Trin - i - ty!
 who wert, and art, and ev - er - more shalt be.
 per - fect in power, in love and pu - ri - ty.
 God in three per - sons, bless - ed Trin - i - ty!