

Holy Textures

Meeting Jesus in Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.
Short, easy to use, faith-provoking insights.

Matthew 28:16-20

"These 5 short verses touch on several crucial themes: 1) The authority of Jesus. 2) The purposes of the church: go, make disciples, baptize, teach, obey, remember. 3) The presence of Jesus-now-resurrected. A congregation that is centred on these will not go far wrong. And might even get a fair bit right."

Listed on The Text This Week, www.textweek.com: Contemporary Commentary, Studies, and Exegesis for the Gospel reading.

Year A

Trinity Sunday

June 19, 2011

First Sunday After Pentecost

Read the passage at the bottom of this post: [Matthew 28:16-20, The Message](#) or [Matthew 28:16-20, The New Revised Standard Version \(NRSV\)](#).

Click here, [Matthew 28:16-20](#), for an easy to print or email Adobe PDF version of this note.

Sermon by the [Rev. Dr. George Hermanson](#), "[Creativity](#)."

This passage which ends the Book of Matthew is commonly referred to as ***The Great Commission***.

The commissioning can be highlighted by the verbs in verses 19 and 20:

- Go
- Make disciples
- Baptize
- Teach
- Obey
- Remember

These verbs represent the key activities that Jesus wants his followers to be doing.

Verse 16. The disciples are now 11 rather than 12 because Judas, who betrayed Jesus to the Roman soldiers, has killed himself.

As Matthew tells the story of the resurrection, at this point, Jesus has only appeared to Mary Magdalene and the other Mary. They are told (Verse 10): "Do not be afraid; go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me."

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Verse 17. I love this verse:

When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted.

Here they are in the presence of the risen Jesus and they both worship and doubt! Sounds like the origins of the United Church to me.

Note that in Verse 9 the two Mary's have worshipped Jesus by prostrating themselves and clasping his feet. This was a traditional way of showing homage and reverence. This action is likely what also happens here.

I would have said that these verses are the first times that Matthew records the disciples worshipping Jesus, but there is an interesting precursor of these themes of resurrection, worship and doubt in the story of Jesus walking on the water, Matthew 14:22-33.

When the disciples first see Jesus, their response is one of terror - "It is a ghost!" Which of course was also the reaction to seeing Jesus resurrected.

We then have the great scene of Peter getting out of the boat and walking on the water himself until he gets distracted by the strong wind. In this scene we see that the authority that has been given to Jesus and that his being with us embeds us in that same authority. But when we become distracted, we sink.

Jesus chastises Peter, "Why did you doubt?" And when they get into the boat, the disciples worship Jesus.

These 5 short verses touch on several crucial themes:

- The authority of Jesus
- The purposes of the church: go, make disciples, baptize, teach, obey, remember.
- The presence of Jesus-now-resurrected.

A congregation that is centred on these will not go far wrong. And might even get a fair bit right.

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Historical background information in this post is drawn primarily from Social-Science Commentary on the Synoptic Gospels, see link below, pages 141-142.

* [Link to Amazon.com Bibliography for Bruce Malina, et. al.](#), Social Science Commentary on ... The Synoptic Gospels; The Gospel of John; The Book of Acts; The Letters of Paul; The Book of Revelation; and others.

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Matthew 28:16-20 (NRSV)

¹⁶ Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them.

¹⁷ When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. ¹⁸ And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 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, ²⁰ and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

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Matthew 28:16-20 (The Message)

¹⁶ Meanwhile, the eleven disciples were on their way to Galilee, headed for the mountain Jesus had set for their reunion. ¹⁷ The moment they saw him they worshiped him. Some, though, held back, not sure about *worship*, about risking themselves totally.

¹⁸ Jesus, undeterred, went right ahead and gave his charge: "God authorized and commanded me to commission you: ¹⁹ Go out and train everyone you meet, far and near, in this way of life, marking them by baptism in the threefold name: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. ²⁰ Then instruct them in the practice of all I have commanded you. I'll be with you as you do this, day after day after day, right up to the end of the age."

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