

SERMON

Matthew 28:16-20

Disciple all the Nations and Baptise Them

Nunawading and Waverley, 19-9-21

Dear friends in Christ,

I have my baptism certificate, framed and on the wall of my study. Here it is. I had it filed away but some years ago I thought of displaying it and giving it a place of prominence. Why would I do that? Some medical people, doctors, dentists, accountants and other professionals display their degrees on a wall. Their qualifications are important to them but what is more important is our entry into the Father's kingdom, which endures forever. I want to display my qualification for being a child of God, that is, my baptism.

Baptising is how we become disciples and children of God. It is not a ceremony because the word says: **those who believe and are baptised will be saved**. And in 1Peter we are told that **baptism saves us; not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a clear conscience toward God. It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ**. Luther said that 'baptism is not water only but water used together with God's word and by his command.' He went on to say in the Small Catechism that 'with the water and our trust in the word...the water is a life-giving water.' A whole ocean of water will not save you at all but one drop with the gospel of Christ added to it, makes all the difference, changing it into an action of God. That is why we give baptism the status of a sacrament.

What does baptism do and how it should be used? What it does is pointed out by the words: **Baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit**. God baptises us into himself, into his being, incorporating and uniting us to himself. Do not underestimate this. Think of yourself as a candle. Now go outside and look at the sun. You will have to rise above the grey Melbourne skies to do so but you will not be able to do so for a second. Our sun is 147million kilometres from us and yet it is incredibly bright. A candle is about 10 lumens so someone with a lot of time on his hands has estimated that the sun is about 3.8×10^{27} times brighter than a candle. Imagine the immensity of God who out

of his great love for you and me says that our little candle can come into his brightness and be united to him.

Since we are being baptised into God, it is a trinitarian action. Baptism grants us fellowship with Father who brings us into a day-by-day relationship with him. It saves us by the action of Christ who shares his resurrection and new life with us. Baptism pours the Holy Spirit into our hearts so that by his dwelling within us, he guarantees that all the love, the forgiveness, and the transforming power of God are attached to us.

Baptism should be used **to disciple the nations**. The text says literally, **make all nations disciples**. It does not say, make some disciples of the nations. Make all the nations disciples. What an audacious thing to say. Baptism rests on Jesus' authority. It is as though he were saying, "Melbourne is mine, so is Brisbane, Gundagai and Darwin, every place on this earth belongs to me. Now, you baptized folk go out there and claim them for me." His authority is in **heaven** and his authority is over the **earth** and the universe. At Jesus' resurrection through to his ascension, the Father bestowed all his authority on this earthly man and heavenly Son. From that position of authority, Jesus shares his power with his baptized people. "As I have baptized and saved you, I now commission you to do the same to all the nations. Go and win them to me as I have already won them through my crucifixion and resurrection."

The Church was pathetically slow in some territories after the apostolic age. Amazingly, Nestorian Christians got to China in the 500s but their missionary efforts were not followed through because of church disputes. Imagine if they had managed to consolidate their mission in China and extend their work into South East Asia and eventually, Australia. Russian mission was quite late; in the mid-900s. The New World in the 15th century. Aboriginal people, in the 18th and 19th centuries.

Perhaps we need to believe afresh that Jesus' authority and Jesus' power to save are with us. Maybe a new boldness needs praying for based on this wonderful promise: **Be clear about this, I am with you every day until the close of the age**. God has begun a colonization of the world, which is not about territory and invasion but

a colonization of the heart. This desire to go to others with the gospel is vital to us and flows out of our baptism.

Baptism joins us to the Lord and propels us into mission.