

*“Remember Whose You Are”*  
Matthew 28:16-20/Psalm 8  
May 29, 2011  
6<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Easter/Graduation Sunday  
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**Matthew 28:16-20**

- 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 give 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.”

**Psalm 8**

- 1 O Lord, our Sovereign, how majestic is your name in all the earth!  
You have set your glory above the heavens.
- 2 Out of the mouths of babes and infants you have founded a bulwark  
because of your foes, to silence the enemy and the avenger.
- 3 When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and  
the stares that you have established;
- 4 What are human beings that you are mindful of them, mortals that you  
care for them?
- 5 Yet you have made them a little lower than God, and crowned them  
with glory and honor.
- 6 You have given them dominion over the works of your hands; you  
have put all things under their feet,
- 7 all sheep and oxen, and also the beasts of the field,
- 8 the birds of the air, and the fish of the sea, whatever passes along the  
paths of the seas.
- 9 O Lord, our Sovereign, how majestic is your name in all the earth!

Since I was a little shy when I was in high school, I didn't ask many girls out on dates. So my friend came up to me one day and said, “Hey, I've lined you up with a great date for Saturday night. It's all set.” “Who is it?” I asked. It turned out to be his cousin Doris. I had never met her. In fact, I had never met any girl named Doris. “Oh,

no,” I said, “I’m not going on a blind date. “Hey, don’t worry about this one,” my friend said. “Doris is a terrific girl. And trust me, she is a real looker. But if you don’t believe me, I’ll tell you how to get out of the date if you don’t like the way she looks. This is what I do: I go to a girl’s front door to pick her up, and when she opens the door, I check her out. If I like what I see, then great, we’re all set. But if she is not someone I want to go out with, I fake an asthma attack. I go ‘Aaahhhhggggg!’ and hold my throat like I am having trouble breathing. The girl asks, ‘What’s wrong?’ And I say, ‘It’s my asthma, I’m sorry we will not be able to go out.’ Works every time, no problems.” It sounded easy enough to me so I thought I would give it a try if I needed to. So I went to pick up Doris. I knocked on the door, and she came to the front door. I took a look at her, and to my surprise, my friend was right. She was beautiful! I stood there not knowing exactly what to say. She took one look at me and went, “Aaahhhhggggg!” Needless to say I didn’t feel too good about who I was that day.

In our Matthew text this morning we have some instructions from Jesus. He instructs his disciples to GO! He instructs them to go make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit and to go teach. Jesus instructs them to go out into the world. How fitting of a text this is for our graduating seniors today. You see these words of Jesus are not just for the 11 disciples some 2000 years ago, but through the power of the Holy Spirit these words of Jesus are for you graduating seniors today and for all of us today. Jesus is saying telling all of us to go out into the world. As for you seniors that is exactly what you are about to do. For the first time in your life you will be leaving home and living somewhere else. You will take on new challenges and meet new people.

But just what do these instructions have to do with our graduates and with all of us? Jesus is saying, it's not just enough to go out into the world, there are things we need to do when we are out there. Jesus tells his disciples to go and baptize in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. I'm pretty sure that at least in the Presbyterian tradition not everyone can go around and baptize people. If that were the case then I wasted a lot of money on seminary. So it's true that not everyone can baptize, but when you think about it - what is baptism? It is a way for God to show God's love for us. Everyone can show God's love. Jesus instructs us to go and to spread God's love, not just in places that are close by but in places all over the world. Go out into world and bring God's love to places that are desperately in need of it. Go out into the world and bring God's love to places that have forgotten about it, places that have never heard about it, and places that are crying out for it day and night. In this passage Jesus also says to go and teach the things that Jesus has taught. But I really don't think Jesus is just talking about teaching with words. Instead, I believe Jesus is instructing us to teach with the way we live our lives. Let our actions and the way we treat others teach people. Yes, in this Great Commission, Jesus instructs all of us to go out into the world and be active in it. Go out and spread God's love and let our lives be an example for others. Jesus is instructing us to go out and make the world a better place through the power of God.

I don't know about you, but when I really think about what Jesus is asking us to do, it seems like an awfully big task. The world is such a big place and there are so many places that need God's love. Right now you might be saying to yourself, "I'm just one person in a world that is so big, what could I possibly do to make a difference?" Maybe you feel like you're not good enough to go out into the world and spread God's

love. Maybe you don't feel worthy of this calling. Maybe you have had one too many dates fake an asthma attack. Maybe you have listened too often to what the world says about you and either don't know who you are or don't really like who you are. Yes, the more I think about what Jesus is asking us to do the more overwhelmed and unprepared I feel to do it. So what are we to do?

First, we are to remember what Jesus says to us at the end of our Matthew passage for today, which is also the last verse in the gospel of Matthew. Jesus says, "***And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.***" We will never be alone in this big world, no matter if we are going away to college or going to Ghana on a medical missions trip. Jesus promises to be with us. After all, at his birth Jesus was called Emmanuel, which means "God with us."

The second thing we can do is look to Psalm 8 for some comfort. In this Psalm the psalmist was asking these same types of questions.

***"When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars that you have established; what are human beings that you are mindful of them, mortals that you care for them?"***

Have you ever stopped and thought about how many beautiful and amazing things God has created? The psalmist mentions the moon and the stars. Tonight just go out after dark and look up to the sky and you will notice the beauty and wonder of the stars and the moon. I have been very blessed to see many of God's wonders up close and in person. I have stood at the top of the Grand Canyon and looked over the ridge to see the beautiful color the rocks make, the flowing river that runs through and the enormous size it takes up. I have been on a boat at the bottom of Niagara Falls to see the power of the water it makes as it rushes over the edge and the rainbows the sun makes as it shines on the water.

I have been to Alaska and seen the huge mountains that start at the sea and rise up 7,8,9 thousand feet all covered in snow shining bright in the sun. I went out on a boat and saw up close glaciers that look blue because of the way the sun reflects off the water. On my bucket list to see in person are the Swiss Alps. Our world is filled with things so beautiful and amazing that they take your breath away and you know only God could create something like that. When we see these things it is easy for us to ask God just as the psalmist did so long ago, "What are human beings that you are mindful of them?"

The answer to the psalmist's question is exactly the same as our answer and I just love it. Verse five says,

***"Yet you have made them (talking about humans) a little lower than God, you crowned them with glory and honor. You have given them dominion over the works of your hands; you have put all things under their feet."***

God has created us just a little lower than God. Not only that, but God has crowned us with glory and honor. With all the wonderful and beautiful things God has created, like the moon and the stars, the sea and the mountains, it is not these things that God has created a little lower than God, it is humans - us, you and me. God is so big and great that we will never be able to fully comprehend all that God is. God is so marvelous and awesome in all that God has created. God is so powerful and strong, so loving and kind, so forgiving and merciful. God stands at the beginning of all creation, is the ruler of all, the Alpha the Omega, the giver of life, and God is even much more than that. And yet in Psalm 8 it says that we are created just a little less than God. Now think about that for a minute. With all that we have just said about God, how does that make you feel to be created just a little lower than that? What do you think about yourself now? If this news doesn't awaken a glorious feeling in you I don't know what will!

It doesn't end there; we are not only created a little less than God, God has also given us dominion over God's glorious and wonderful creation. We have been given dominion over all the animals of the land, of the air and of the sea. Not just the animals, but the psalmist says all the works of God's hands. Now keep in mind that dominion does not mean to rule. A better definition of dominion would be "to care for." In other words God has entrusted us to help care for God's beautiful creation. So how does that make you feel? What do you think about yourself now? The real question is not "Who you are?" but "Whose you are?"

We must be careful though not to get caught up in how great we are. Psalm 8 is not really about humans and how great we are. It is about God and how great God is. Looking back at Psalm 8, it starts and ends with the same verse, "***O Lord, our Sovereign, how majestic is your name in all the earth!***" It is only because of who God is and God's love for us that we are created a little less than God and given dominion over creation. It is not from anything we have done, but only from how wonderful God is.

I would like to leave you with a poem titled Celebrate You. The author is unknown.

*"Celebrate You! You are worth celebrating. You are worth everything. You are unique. In the whole world, there is only one you. There is only one person with your talents, your experience, your gifts. No one can take your place. God created only one you, precious in his sight. You have immense potential to love, to care, to create, to grow, to sacrifice, if you believe in yourself. It doesn't matter your age, or your color, or whether your parents loved you or not. (Maybe they wanted to but couldn't.) Let that go. It belongs to the past. You belong to the now. It doesn't matter what you have been. The wrong you've done. The mistakes you've made. The people you've hurt. You are forgiven. You are accepted. You're okay. You are loved-in spite of everything. So love yourself, and nourish the seeds within you. Celebrate you. Begin now. Start anew. Give*

*yourself a new birth. Today. You are you and that is all you need to be. You are temporary. Here today and gone tomorrow. But today. Today can be a new beginning, a new thing, a new life. You cannot deserve this new life. It is given freely. That is the miracle called God. So celebrate the miracle and celebrate you!”*

So today I tell you to go. Go out into the world and make a difference and celebrate who you are. But you can only truly celebrate who you are when you remember whose you are. Amen.