

This isn't just for the apostles, it isn't just for the clergy

Why did Jesus make them go up to Galilee and then come back to Jerusalem? Possibly because that is where most of his disciples were. Whether or not that is why one thing is certain there were a lot more people here than just the 11 disciples.

What Jesus says here is not just for the apostles is it? There are places in scripture where it is clear that Jesus does speak specifically to the apostles. They have a special role, but not here. This is a command clearly given to all his disciples.

Are we ourselves disciples?

So are we among those disciples?

We were hiking in Tennessee when we met a woman with the shirt "I'm not a believer . . . I'm a disciple"

Putting the best construction on that T-shirt you could take it as a reminder that just because you come to church and sit in the pew and repeat the Apostle's Creed doesn't mean you are really Jesus' disciple / believer.

On the other hand the shirt makes the mistake of promoting a tiered Christianity. In other words there are believers and then there are those who are really his followers, his disciples. This is clearly contrary to scripture, "whoever believes and is baptized shall be saved."

Secondly whereas the word of God calls on us to judge our own heart, and confess the sins we find there, such a shirt judges others and doesn't confess one's own sin.

So fine we don't want others to judge us, then let us judge ourselves.

Jesus says to all his disciples "go and make disciples"

Are we going out?

So are we going, as Jesus commanded to share the good news? When was the last time that you spoke to a friend of a neighbor or an associate about Christ? When was the last time you invited one of them to come to church with you?

I did wedding once (no it wasn't my brothers) after the wedding I happened to be near the bride and groom when someone said to them, "wow I didn't know you were that religious" These were their closest friends and they didn't know about this part of their life. Do your friends, the people you work with etc know about this part of your life. If not why not?

Jesus tells us to go and make disciples, this is the one thing he tells us. He is getting ready to ascend into heaven, all his disciples are gathered here and the one thing he wants to tell them: "Your sins are forgiven now go and tell everyone else how their sins are forgiven too."

We can't do it right

Sometimes it's just because we never have the right moment, or the right circumstance. I know what this is like. I particularly have a problem with this. I often spend way too much time trying to make sure things are just perfect. In fact this week I spent hours trying to make a really good VBS poster.

There is always that idea in the back of our head that if we can say exactly the right thing, then boom we can convince this person or that person. Our human nature wants to resort to marketing tricks to get people into church.

But we are never going to do it perfectly, there is never going to be the perfect moment, we are never going to say the perfect words. None of us are capable of walking up to a woman at a well and knowing exactly the right thing to say to get her to confess her sin of sleeping around.

Following Jesus always begins by confessing our sins. So it does here as well. Jesus we have sinned because we haven't done this, and we have sinned because when we do it we fail to do it right. Jesus forgives our sins and gives us what we need to do it right.

This is why Jesus gives us tools, two tools for the work of evangelism. Baptism and teaching the word. Our own baptism, which reminds us that we are forgiven and that we are truly Christ's disciples. And the Word of God through which the Holy Spirit works, so that even though we rarely say exactly the right thing, the Holy Spirit still uses that word to change the hearts of men

Fear

Of course another reason that many of our friends might not even know that we are Christian is because of fear.

Chris Roseborough was talking about how Lutherans are like a fortress with a moat around it and all the windows and doors are shut, in other words we shut ourselves off from others. And he was saying he doesn't understand why we do that. I think I do. I think it's largely because we know that 99% of the time all we are going to get for our trouble is ridicule.

People routinely scoff at us for believing the word of God, not only unbelievers but other Christians as well. And when that happens time and time again, what do we do we go into the castle and shut the doors.

Jesus has a solution to this as well, "all power is given to me in heaven and on earth." Hey that is the theme of our VBS. "all power is given to me . . . therefore go" and "I am with you always."

We don't need to be afraid of this world, because Jesus is standing right there next to us. We don't need to hide in a castle because Jesus is there. And by the way there is the answer to our previous question? Are you really his disciples? Yes you are. Not because you prove it by doing good works but because Jesus is there standing next to you right now.

But there is another reason why we don't need to be afraid, the very last words of our text, "to the end of the age." Actually what Jesus said was to the completion of the age, the completion of history.

We often think of the last day as a rupture in history. The World is going along and then it is cut off by Christ's returning. But the implication of this passage is that Christ is not going to cut off history but He is going to bring it to a completion with his coming. The cake is done and the frosting is added.

This is a really hard thing to believe, but it is nevertheless true. God and Christ have a particular plan, and they are crafting all of human history for this goal. And you are a part of it. Go therefore and build with Christ.

So Jesus calls all of us to go forth and share the good news that our sins are forgiven. He prepares us for this task by washing us in the waters of baptism, forgiving our sins, and giving us the Holy Spirit. He himself gives the very words to speak. He stands beside us to protect us in all this work. And He assures us that this work is not in vain but is part of a bigger plan, the plan He has for all of human history.

Amen.

The peace of God that surpasses all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.