

**Sermon “We Need All Three”**  
**Sunday May 31<sup>st</sup>, 2026**  
**Kirk of St James**  
**Rev. Amanda Henderson-Bolton**

It always strikes me as funny what things stick in children’s minds. The other day one of Theo’s daycare teachers said, “Oh my god” and apparently Theo got after her and said you shouldn’t say that because God is our friend. Meanwhile, no matter how many times I tell the boys to stop fighting they cannot hear a thing!

So much of our lives growing up for better or for worse are spent learning about the world around us, by watching people and taking our cues from what they do. Our parents and families help us grow up until we are finally ready to leave the nest. Then it is time for them to spread their wings and try to stand on their own. When we come to our passage in Matthew today, we find a similar scene. The word disciple means (in part) a student or a follower of a teacher or leader. The disciples have been following diligently in the footsteps of Jesus as he travelled around Galilee and the surrounding areas. They have watched him heal others, welcome sinners, and share the good news of the gospel. Now these disciples who have followed so closely are being set free to continue that good work. The disciples themselves feel unprepared; they do not feel that they can live up to the teachings of Jesus; they still do not feel that they understand enough. However, Jesus the teacher feels that he has given them everything they need and it is time for them to go out on their own. Before Jesus leaves them, he commands them to "make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." Then he was gone.

While the command that Jesus leaves with his disciples is often looked upon as the mission of the church, that little three-part blessing of Father, Son and Holy Spirit was to become a sticking point for generations of church leaders as they argued over what it could mean. Father, Son and Holy Spirit, together known as the Trinity. Today is known as Trinity Sunday in the church year. The day we set aside to puzzle over this holy mystery. Now as some scholars point out "The doctrine of the trinity was not dreamed up by a theological think tank but was articulated by actual worshiping and serving Christians who under stress, and in the face of questions and challenges, were sweating it out to say with clarity just why they were willing to live a life that looked foolish to others, caring for widows and orphans, suffering persecution, and spilling their own blood--all of it for the wild notion that the Spirit had gathered them into the life of God, the God who in Christ was making peace with the world." This doctrine was to help us in our understanding, and in sharing the good news with others.

When Jesus came into the world he did a new thing. It had never been done before, and the world did not know how to respond. That day when Jesus meets his disciples in Galilee--the land of the Gentiles and sent them out into the entire world to continue his work he is shaping a future for both his disciples gathered with him, and all those who will come after. It is through the power of the Creator, Son, and Holy Spirit that we are made disciples. So often our discussion around Trinity is about the substance of the Trinity and how we understand the persons of the Trinity in relation to one another. I don't want to break down the conversation today around those questions. Instead, I would like to look at the importance of the Trinity in relation to our faith lives and how we are sent into the world as disciples of Christ.

The eleven men gathered with Jesus that day did not feel like they were ready to live without their teacher. Yet when they are sent it is with the power of the Trinity. One biblical commentary that I read asked an interesting question--what if there was no Trinity. What if we were sent only in the name of the God? What if that were the only way we could relate to God? That idea feels incomplete, doesn't it? God as creator would be a powerful but remote God. We need the Son in order to relate to God. We would miss the great love that God has for us because we would not know Christ. Through the life, death, and resurrection of Christ we come to understand God in a new way. We need the Son in order to relate to God as Creator or Parent. What if it was only God as Son? We would lose out on the creativity of God, and the unconditional love, and the promise of being fully known by the God. We would also lose out on the ongoing work and presence of the spirit among us. We need to the Spirit to give us the courage to continue to carry out the great commission in the world. We need all three in order to understand our call and place in this remarkable story. We need God the Creator, Son and Holy Spirit and we cannot go out into the world without them. "We are immersed into the whole being of God, whether we understand it or not. We are not powerless in the world; we are not disconnected from the omnipotent God as creator, or from the redeeming work of God in human flesh, or from that very presence of that same God in the Holy Spirit, who dwells within us and among us..."

Some days we may find ourselves feeling like the disciples did--like we have no idea how to do this faith thing or live it out in our lives. But we are reminded that we have all the gifts we need. It is not about going out into the world and trying to fix it with a magic formula,

or with water. He sends us out as disciples who will then help others become disciples. This is about us enfolding others into this way of living. We have an incredible story to tell about a creator who loves us more than we can imagine. About his Son who taught us how to love, how to live, and how to care for others, and the Spirit who gives us the courage to keep going. Evangelism has a bad rap in today's world. Unfortunately, we often associate it with pushiness, manipulation, or force. Jesus never forced people into the kingdom. Instead, he walked alongside people and offered them another way to live in the world. When people saw it, it did not make sense at first, but eventually they said, "I want what you have--I want that hope, that new way of living in the world." Jesus invites us into the mutuality and power of the divine life. He sends us to invite still others, from all nations. We do so knowing the presence of God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit goes with us. On this Trinity Sunday I invite all of us to consider how we are disciples of Christ in our lives today. How do you live out your call as a disciple, and how do you invite others into that life?