

Sermon about Matthew 28, 16-20 on 6th Sunday after Trinity 2021 in BXL (III^N)

Blessing: The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

Bible: (16) Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. (17) And 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) teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

Prayer: Lord Jesus Christ, empower your people to announce the good news that you have brought to earth the life of heaven, that you have sacrificed yourself for sinners, that you have been raised from the dead and exalted as Lord over all creation. (Amen.)

Sermon: *Opener – Jesus calls to climb the mountain:* Summer, almost holidays. The weather forecast is promising. And we are invited to a mountain hiking tour. Yes, the Lord Jesus Christ himself invites us to the top of the mountain! – Sounds nice, but it is less an invitation to a recreational day out in fresh air with breath-taking views across the Alpes than the call to follow with faith on the way of life. And we all know that this is often more a permanent hard march across stony passages than a nice walk on smooth paths. With faith in Jesus and Him as Lord, life is not necessarily easier, not without problems. But as baptised children of God, we know that the walk will have a good destination and that in the end everything will be fine. This feeling, this expectation, or sense is what we call *faith*. This is the message of our baptism when God said once to every one of us personally: “Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have

called you by name, you are mine.” (Is 43, 1) – Now, Jesus calls us to take His gift of sonship and to follow him. He calls us to climb the mountain of life.

1. *Worship and doubt:* It is a great invitation but no simple promise. Believing may sound so simple but we all know that it is not. Living each day new out of my Baptism means to start each day new on this mountain trip. On the one day it might be easy by expecting the morning sun above the mountain peaks and nice views but the other day it is hard to get up and set off and to trust in Jesus’ promise. The good message is that Jesus does not ask us beforehand. He does not demand from us that we are perfect, professional mountain climbers. To belong to Jesus premises nothing, not even not to doubt! It is one of the most merciful passages of the whole Bible that it is said of the disciples: “And when they saw him they worshiped him, but some doubted.” The disciples stand in front of the resurrected Lord, personally, *...and some are doubting!* But Jesus does not care of their doubt in this moment, he speaks to all of them. He does not say: “Hey, you three, you have a stable faith, you may stay, and the rest, you are doubting, you can go. I have no use for you.” No! The resurrected Christ surpasses all division of doubt which was so obvious in the passion before.¹ The Apostle Paul explains in the Epistle that we are baptised into Jesus’ death. That means we also have part of Jesus’ fear and suffering, and yes, of His death. This means also that *our* fears, and suffering, and death is carried and manged by Jesus Christ. We are invited to worship Him and to follow Him *even with doubt*. Doubt means, that I have faith, otherwise I would not doubt. And this small spark or start of faith is enough for Jesus to count someone to His team. – Martin Luther by the way, counts doubt to the three normal statutes of a Christian which are always rotating: meditating (he means to think about God’s Word) – praying – and doubting. One brings me to the next but together they mean that I am still believing. – And believing means also that I

¹ Vgl. Johannes M. Modeß. Predigtmeditation über Mt 28, 16-20. In : GPM #75/3. Göttingen 2021. Seite 405.

am always allowed to believe more than I would sign.² It is not important to be able to explain everything. Important is to belong to the Master of Life who has all authority in heaven and on earth. And as baptised Christian, I belong to him. He has called me by my name to follow Him to the top.

2. *Sharing the Hope:* The Lord integrates me into His team without any preconditions. But then he calls me to also invite others. This great message of God's mercy shall be spread. This is the mission. The more people join the party the better. "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, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you." – Again, Jesus does not expect that we are fanatic, flying missionaries. But he expects us to share what we have. There might be the brothers and sisters who can actively, maybe as professionals, spread the Gospel and preach and teach in neighbourhoods or foreign countries because they are overflowing full of spirit. But there might be also the others, the doubters who are called as well. They can be the gentle, soft multipliers with the silent, but therefore convincing voices who have a sense for human affliction and who are specialists in keeping the faith *despite* and *with doubt*. Also these experiences and knowledge are important in and for the team and the challenge to bring the Gospel to the people. – The Greek word which is used for "make disciples" implies a personal connotation. The people out there are no faceless mass. They are addressed personally as precious individuals as you are personally meant and addressed by Jesus as well. – How could this work practically when we are not professional missionaries? Well, of course, the simplest thing is to pray and donate for mission societies. But in our normal life, we can answer when we are asked after faith things. Or we can live differently, in ethical questions for example and in this way, we can proclaim the Gospel with our deeds. And when people

² This and other thoughts: Vgl. a.a.O.

see that we are normal but friendly people with different merits they might question why and then it might be enough to say “because we are Christians”. – We will know what to do and to say when we basically know in heart and mind that we have a hope that the world does not have but needs. Even when we doubt sometimes or always a bit – this is, I am sure, a basic aspect of faith, the sense of hope. And to have this sense is the best start to share it.

Aim. Immanuel – God with Us: Finally, everything has its beginning and end in the promise of Jesus: “And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” Could there be a greater promise? If we are strong or doubting, if we are members of a lively, prospering congregation or parts of a small, persecuted house-church, if we are active missionaries or silent examples of God’s world, *the Lord is with us*. It is the promise since Christmas: Immanuel, God with us. And it became a personal promise to each of us, to you and to me, by our Holy Baptism: “Fear not, for I have redeemed you, I have called you by name, you are mine.” (Old Testament Reading, Isaiah 43, 1) – Let’s pray:

Prayer: Lord God, merciful Father, we thank You and give you praise that You have called us and made us Your children, despite our sin and doubts. Take us as Your servants and equip us with the necessary gifts to proclaim the good news to all people that we may be united in One Church on the day your son Jesus Christ will come and lead us home. In Jesus’s name we pray. Amen.

Blessing: The peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. (Amen.)