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St. Paul's Lutheran Church
2100 16th Street SW
Austin, MN 55912-1749
Pastor Ted Barthels
Sermon preached on
September 9, 2018
16th Sunday after Pentecost
(Christian Education Sunday)

Scripture Lessons: Deuteronomy 6:4-9; 2 Timothy 3:12-17
Hymns: 224; 629; 294; 50:2 (238:3-5)

Grace be unto you and peace from God our Father and our Lord
and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Sermon Text: Matthew 28:20

“Teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you;
and lo, I am with you always, *even* to the end of the age.” Amen.
(NKJV)

This is the Word of God.

Sanctify us, oh Lord, through Your truth. Your Word is truth.
Amen.

In Christ Jesus, God our Savior, dear fellow Redeemed:

INTRO: Jesus' Teaching Ministry --

We are familiar with so many of Jesus' miracles. We have all learned about the beginning of signs which Jesus performed in Cana of Galilee when Jesus changed water into wine. We have heard the biblical accounts of so many other signs and wonders which Jesus did, restoring sight to the blind, healing the paralyzed man in Capernaum; there He had also healed the Roman centurion's servant and Peter's mother-in-law. We are familiar with Jesus feeding the five thousand, and again soon after that feeding the four thousand, each time with but a small portion of food, but with many leftovers remaining. We know how Jesus

calmed the storm. We recall the healing of the leper, who begged for mercy, and the healing of the ten lepers of whom only one returned to give thanks and glorify God. We have learned that on three different occasions Jesus even raised the dead back to life again, Jairus' daughter, the young man of Nain, and final also Jesus' own friend Lazarus who had been in the grave for more than three days. Yes, these are powerful and important lessons, and there are so many more. These are lessons your children need to hear and know that they also might know and believe that Jesus is the Christ the Son of the living God, that He is the Christ who is come into the world.

Since we know of these miraculous signs and wonders, of which those listed are only a sampling, and that even all the miracles included in the gospels are not even close to a complete list of the miracles of our Lord, we might conclude that this is what Jesus' ministry was all about. Indeed it is true that Jesus went about doing good and healing many people of their diseases.

However, this was not the main focus of Jesus' ministry. In fact it was so far from the main focus of Jesus' ministry that He didn't want people spreading the news of His miraculous healings. Out of context the reports of Jesus' miracles led to a misunderstanding of why Jesus had come into the world.

The main focus of Jesus' ministry was His teaching. Everyday Jesus was busy teaching. He not only made it His custom to go to the synagogue on the Sabbath Day and share the truth of the Scriptures with those assembled there, but He daily taught the crowds that gathered about Him in great numbers. On that occasion of the feeding of the five thousand the day had begun with Jesus and His disciples crossing the Sea of Galilee in a boat and then, "*Jesus ... saw a great multitude and was moved with compassion for them, because they were like sheep not having a shepherd. So He began to teach them many things.*" (Mark 6:34)

The greatest need Jesus saw among His countrymen was the need for the truth of God's Word. He taught large crowds. He taught the disciples in private gatherings. He taught in intimate home settings around dinner tables, and even with a woman named Mary of Bethany sitting at Jesus' feet. Jesus did not ramble on about

politics or vain ideas concerning the philosophy of this world. He communicated God's truth, the truth that saves souls. And the people knew, even when they were unwilling to believe, the people knew the power of Jesus' teaching. On at least two separate occasions the gospels report: "*The people were astonished at His teaching,* ²⁹ *for He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.*" (Matthew 7:28-29, Mark 1:22)

So today it is most fitting for us on our Christian education Sunday to consider –

THEME: Jesus' Emphasis on Teaching.

The words of our text are taken from the great commission recorded at the conclusion of Matthew's gospel. Jesus is about to ascend to His native heaven, removing His visible presence from the earth, but at the same time charging His disciples (including believers of all time throughout the world) with their gospel mission. We know it was Jesus' stated purpose that the disciples make disciples. To that end they were charged with the use of the means of grace, the gospel in word and sacrament. The Great Commission charges us to baptize, and to teach. Jesus very simply but directly states that we are to maintain the same focus of ministry that was evident in Jesus' own ministry.

I. Teach them!

Of course we are not going to remove the spiritual context from these words. Jesus is commanding that people be taught the truth of the gospel, that is the truth of salvation.

Important? We can answer that with "of course it's important!" What did the Apostle Paul write to the Romans? "*Whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.*" ¹⁴ *How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? ...* ¹⁷ *So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.* (Romans 10:13-14, 17)

Preaching and teaching go hand in hand. The gospel has to be presented to people in order for them to come to faith. It doesn't

happen all by itself. Children need to be taught from the time that they are very little. Faith doesn't come by osmosis. It doesn't just seep in of itself. We daren't assume that our children or our acquaintances for that matter know enough to get by, that they know enough to get into heaven. What happens by intellectual osmosis is that the philosophy of this world seeps in and poisons the minds and hearts of souls dearly bought by the blood of Christ.

I've seen children in Christian families that as young as three years of age knew the Lord's prayer and even a good amount of the Apostle's Creed, and were heard repeating the words of the benediction at home as they "played" church, simply because they were brought to church faithfully. It is a wonderful testimony to the powerful working of the Holy Spirit that such young children know Jesus loves them and takes their sins away; that God is **their** God, and watches over them each and every day.

Children need to be taught. I've seen children in Christian families who as old as eleven and twelve years of age who did not know the Lord's Prayer, did not know what the Apostle's Creed is, and ultimately concluded that Jesus would love them if they tried hard to be good.

Children need to be taught, and that is exactly what Jesus desired. We read in Mark's gospel: *"Then they brought little children to Him, that He might touch them; but the disciples rebuked those who brought them. ¹⁴ But when Jesus saw it, He was greatly displeased and said to them, 'Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of God.*

¹⁵ Assuredly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will by no means enter it.' " (Mark 10:13-15)

Yes, this begins at home as our Old Testament lesson also taught us, but we also teach our children the importance of worship by bringing them to church and *together* calling upon the name of the Lord, that *together* we might be edified and grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. So we teach our children also here at church in Sunday school, and as they grow older in Catechism classes, so that they might know Jesus as their Redeemer Lord.

Children need to be taught, but so do adults of all ages. We are all subjected to the vain philosophy of this world. We all have trouble remembering all that we have learned in the past. None of us, NONE of us have mastered the Holy Scriptures so that we know all that we need to know about God and our Savior Jesus Christ. The idea that one knows enough to be saved may have some validity with deathbed conversions, but it has no place as an approach to life with the Lord. Sermons review many of the basic truths of the Bible on a regular basis, but Bible class offers opportunities to learn so much more and to ask questions, and probe issues that have troubled us.

Jesus taught the people *many* things, and now Jesus has commissioned *us* to teach, and to sit at His feet to learn from Him. I don't think the response "I know what I need to know to get by" would be found acceptable by the Lord Jesus because in our text He clearly asserts Teach them –

II. To Observe All I have Commanded.

Jesus taught many lessons on the Old Testament. He taught from the Scriptures and about the Scriptures. Jesus taught that the Word of God is true in every detail. Every Sunday morning, following the reading of the text, you have heard me repeat the same words again and again. Maybe you didn't realize that I am paraphrasing the words of our Lord Jesus as He was praying to His heavenly Father saying, "***Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth.***" (John 17:17) In this prayer Jesus was talking about the Word of God being true, all true and nothing but true! More than that Jesus was stating that it is through the presentation of the Word of God that people are sanctified. Sanctified means to be set aside as holy, drawn out from the world, made separate from sin. The Holy Spirit has called you by the gospel to be children of God. The Holy Spirit has brought you to know and believe that Jesus bore our sins in His own body on the tree, and that we are reconciled to God by Jesus' sacrifice. It is Jesus' righteousness, His perfect fulfillment of the law of God, that is credited to you in the great exchange where Jesus is made sin for us and we are made the righteousness of God in Him. (2 Corinthians 5:19,21)

All the wonderful truths of Holy Scripture are woven together as a whole so that we might comprehend the love of God in Christ Jesus. That is what Jesus taught, and that is exactly what He has commanded us to teach, ALL that He has commanded! We can't compromise on the truth of Scripture because it is not ours to do with as we might wish; it is the Word of the Lord!

All the truths of Holy Scripture are like spokes on a wheel. Some might assume that this or another teaching is so far removed from the gospel, but each and every teaching of Holy Scripture is connected back to that central hub of truth that is the gospel of Christ our crucified and risen Savior. One of the most obvious examples is the false teaching of theistic evolution, which is supposedly a "good compromise" between science and theology. That idea thrills the devil. If we accept that the world is millions of years old that and the world as we know it came to be by gradual change, even if we say it was change directed by God, what does that do to the gospel? Most Christian denominations say "Nothing" and they couldn't be more wrong!

Not only does this foolish teaching diminish God presenting Him as being incapable of making things right in the first place, but it also makes God the author of suffering and death, making death His tool for creation. So then we don't need salvation because of Adam's sin, but because of God's failure. So then the truth, the truth of Holy Scripture that "through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned," (Romans 5:12) would be nothing more than a lie manufactured by God to cover His own mistakes. So what of our Savior and His righteousness? Where's the need for righteousness? What then would be the point of Jesus' sufferings and death, and resurrection, a resurrection many Christian denominations question if not outright deny? Then it all becomes about this world.

It is so easy to be deceived, to be lured down the path of man's reason. We need to teach, not only that which is palatable to human reason, or social values, or political correctness, but **all** that the Lord has commanded.

May the Spirit revitalize our zeal for both hearing and teaching the truth of God's Word, that we and our children might have life in Jesus' name!

AMEN.

“Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.” Amen. (Romans15:13)