

Reading: Matthew 28:16-20

As soon as our son-in-law heard that we were coming over to see them in America, he asked us to bring as many bars of Whittakers chocolate as we could. He reckoned you can't get good chocolate in America. Anyway, he is not alone in liking Whittakers chocolate. In a recent survey of 1700 New Zealanders, Whittakers was the most trusted brand.

Trust is at the heart of what it means to be Christian. Our word for faith comes from the Latin word to trust. Sometimes we mistakenly think that if we just believe the right things about God then that is all we need do. On this Trinity Sunday it would be even more tempting to think it's all about believing in the right stuff.

But growing as Christian people is about moving from our heads to our hearts. Learning to trust our loving God who wants the best for us. To help us move from our head to our heart today, just for today I have changed the word 'believe' in the Creed to 'trust'. I hope you find as you say it that it takes you much deeper in your faith. God is always leading us into a deeper, more trusting relationship with him. This is what he longs for us today.

Sometimes people get bent out of shape trying to get their heads around, notice the language again, heads around the Trinity. How can one God be three persons. Surely this is a contradiction. And yet daily we do this without any problem. I am just one person, Nick, and yet I am a husband to my wife, a brother to my sister and a father to my children. I can be all three at the same time. Indeed one role takes nothing from the others. I am being a good husband by being a good father. When I am being a brother this takes nothing away from my fatherhood.

In the same way God can be Father, Son and Holy Spirit. When one is present, all are present. When the Spirit is at work in our lives, this takes nothing away from the Father or from the Son.

In our Matthew Gospel reading Jesus is giving the disciples their final instructions. These are the closing verses of Matthew's Gospel. Remember how it all started. Jesus was a vulnerable baby, a human child. Now he has been given all authority in heaven and earth and he is giving that authority to us. We can be left in little doubt that our mission is for **all** people. In fact, the word **all** appears no less than four times in a couple of verses. Jesus has **all** authority. He sends us to **all** nations to pass on **all** that he has taught, and he will be with us for **all** time.

The Vicar gathered the children around her feet for the kids talk. "Who is the most important person in all the Bible?" she asked. Johnny put up his hand, "Lo," he said. This wasn't the answer she had wanted but she asked, "So Johnny, why is Lo the most important person in all the Bible?" "Because Jesus said, "Lo, I am with you always."

But the point is worth making. There is no time or place or person outside Jesus' reach or care. There is nothing in all Creation which can separate us from God's loving. Jesus invites all people into his caring embrace.

Just think of the trust that Jesus is placing in us. He is giving us the job of sharing the Good News and of baptizing. He is entrusting the job of sharing God's love to no one else.

Legend has it that when Jesus ascended into heaven the angels were shocked to see his terrible wounds and how much he had suffered for us. "Lord," said the angel Gabriel to Jesus, "Do all the people on earth know how much you suffered for them and how much you love them?" "Oh no," said Jesus, "only a tiny handful, but they'll tell the rest." Gabriel looked confused. He knew how fickle people are. He knew how forgetful they are. He knew how prone to doubt they are. "But Lord what if those people begin to doubt you? What if they get so involved in their lives that they forget to tell others about you? Or what if the people they tell forget to tell others? What's your backup plan - just in case." Jesus looked at Gabriel "Oh, I've thought about that but I have decided against a backup plan. This is my only plan. I'm counting on my friends."

Twenty one centuries later Jesus still has no other plan but us, his friends.

One Sabbath I traveled to Sabah in Malaysia and visited the huge Anglican church of St Patrick's. What began as a small expatriate parish now has thousands attending every week. Carved into the back wall of the huge auditorium are the words of today's Gospel "Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit." These words are known as the Great Commission. And if ever a parish lived up to their mission statement, St Patrick's is it. They have grown exponentially to include many thousands of people.

I heard one speaker say: "To tell the church to grow is like telling a car factory to produce cars - it's what we are here for."

But it all begins with us. With a living, trusting and intimate relationship with God. It all starts by taking our seat at the table. When we come each week to the table of the Lord we are being invited into a loving, intimate relationship with God. When we pray, we are trusting enough to place ourselves into the loving presence of God. Prayer is simply allowing ourselves to be held in the loving presence of God. An intimate friendship with Jesus is the end goal - it is also the beginning point, and it is every step along the way of the Christian journey.

Henri Nouwen puts it like this: *Jesus invites us to abide in his love. That means to dwell with all that I am in him. It is an invitation to a total belonging, to full intimacy, to an unlimited being-with ... An unlimited being-with.*

Jesus' invitation is still the same as it was all those centuries ago: *Come find a seat at my table, come and be my friend, come and have a life-giving intimate relationship with me and all the Trinity and then you will want to tell people I love them.*