



DEVOTIONS FOR LIFE

Aldersgate Church ~ St. Louis Park, MN

Week of April 16, 2023 (Matthew 28:16-20)

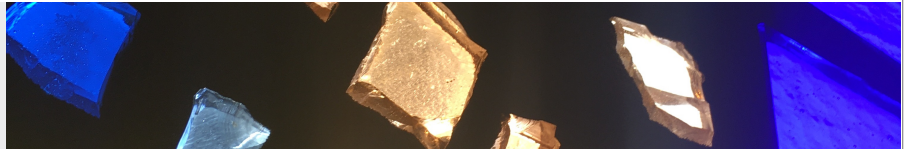
Prayer for Groups & Personal Devotion

God of outstanding promises, you said you would be with us to the end of the age! Not just the end of the day, or to help us get through the week, or to put a bad year behind us, but now and forever.

You promised you would be a friend: a friend who would be with us in our troubles and in our sorrows, in the highlights of our life, and in the things we have shut from our memory.

You promised to open the eyes of the blind and teach people to see: not just their own needs, but the needs of others, and to see the world through your eyes.

You promised to make us peacemakers and in a world with so many wars and acts of terror, we need to learn to stand up tall, speak out about justice, fairness and equality, to lay down our arms, and discover that we are brothers and sisters who long for peace...



Devotions for Life

Context: Jesus has risen from the dead. He has appeared to at least two women (Mary Magdalene and another Mary), and he has reiterated the angel's message to them at the tomb, which is to go and tell the others. And they did.

In this week's story, the end of Matthew, we skip over a few verses which tell us that the religious leaders worked with Rome to put out a story that the disciples stole Jesus' body. It's a curious detail for Matthew to include. Then we head to Galilee.

Galilee is where the Mary and Mary told the disciples to go to meet Jesus, so they head up there to do just that. This is markedly different than Luke's Gospel where the disciples' encounter Jesus while still in Jerusalem after calling the women's story of having seen Jesus an "idle tale". But here in Matthew we only get this brief, but powerful and vitally important encounter. It is here that Jesus' gives the disciples what is known today as The Great Commission, the root of the United Methodist mission statement: "To make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world."

This story is only five verses, but they pack a big punch and warrant close and thorough examination. As you read it, pay close attention to every detail and the words that are chosen. There are a lot of big words in it!

It's also important to read this passage in context with Matthew's whole Gospel. In particular, note that Jesus

... You promised to send us out in your name to teach the world the Good News, you were not thinking about our theological nor our denominational understandings, you just wanted us to share what you had shared with us, and to practice what you did for others to Love God and our neighbours.

So wherever we are, whatever we do, we are the story tellers of Jesus, who bring Good News to where it is needed, who understand it is not a one person job, but a faithful responsibility for all God's people everywhere, until the end of the age.
Amen.

*(Prayer for Groups and Personal Devotion
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**EVERY
MEAL**

says, "Go to all nations...". The last time Jesus spoke of "all nations" was in the parable of the sheep and goats. With this in mind, this passage must be read in concert with that parable. Also, look for themes or ideas in this passage that we've also seen in Matthew, chief among how power and authority operate.

Questions for Reflection & Discussion:

1. What words, images, or moments stand out to you in this passage?
2. The story says that "they worshiped him, but some doubted." Can we both worship Jesus and doubt at the same time?
3. Why do you think Matthew takes the specify the "eleven disciples"?
4. What is a "disciple"? How are they "made"?
5. What does Jesus mean by "all nations"? Where else in this Gospel has Matthew mentioned "all nations"?
6. What are the implications of baptizing? Is Jesus asking us to perform a religious ritual, or is there something more to baptism?
7. What does it mean to do anything "in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit"?
8. What does Jesus tell the disciples to "teach" them?
9. What is it that the disciples ended up going and doing (hint: see the Book of Acts)?
10. What is "The Church". What is your dream/vision for the Church?

Compassion & Justice

It's April! This month we are raising funds for Every Meal. This is an amazing organization that sets up kids with weekend food packs to help curb the lack of meals many kids experience on the weekends. Check them out at www.everymeal.org.