

Let us pray:

May the words of my mouth and the meditations of each heart

Be acceptable to you, O Lord our strength and our Redeemer,

Amen.

“When they saw him, they worshiped him;

But some doubted.”

Even though they were willing to come out of hiding to see him,

Even though they were willing to travel from Jerusalem,

To climb up a mountain

To do all of this based on rumors and the hope that Jesus might be alive again,

Even though they were now seeing the resurrected Lord face to face

Still, we are told in the preaching text for today that some of the disciples doubted.

Why did they doubt?

What kind of doubts did they have?

When I have questions like this, I find it helpful to imagine the event from the point of
view of someone who was there.

To better understand the disciples doubts,

And our own doubts,

Let’s imagine Jesus’ Great Commission from the point of view of a disciple.

What might Andrew have been thinking, feeling, and wondering about on that day on
the mountain, facing a resurrected Jesus?

Andrew may have wondered: “How is this possible?”

“I know he died. Was it all some kind of trick?”

And then the deeper question:

“Who is this man?”

At that point, Andrew might look around and reflect that he is back in Galilee.

Back in his hometown, where it all began.

Andrew and his brother, Peter, been casting out a net when a man called to them and
said,

“Follow me, and I will make you fish for people.”

Since then, nothing had been the same for Andrew.

Andrew had been amazed when Jesus healed a paralytic by saying, “Your sins are
forgiven.”

Andrew thought back on all the sermons and parables he’d heard in his time with
Jesus.

He remembered the very first one, which took place on that same mountain in Galilee.

Andrew looked around the mountain and remembered himself, a new disciple, getting
ready to listen to Jesus’ teachings, surrounded by a huge crowd of curious,
hopeful people.

He heard Jesus’ first words in his mind: “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the
kingdom of heaven.”

Andrew remembered being glad that Jesus took those words to heart when he and the
other disciples experienced fear, confusion or doubt.

During their time together, Jesus had done some very unexpected things.

Like tell a storm to stop, or walk on water.

Those moments had been frightening to Andrew, kind of like this moment.

He’d asked himself a similar question, back then:

“What sort of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him?”

“What sort of man is this...” Thought Andrew.

“What sort of man.”

“He was a healer, but he healed not only people’s bodies—he also cleansed them of their sins.

He was a prophet—always making trouble with the authorities—but he spoke with more authority than any prophet ever has.

He was a teacher—not only with words, but by example, and he often surprised us.”

Andrew looked around the mountain, thinking about how much had changed between his first time there with Jesus and this time.

There were many memories, but also this: Jesus had died, and now was alive again. Standing in front of him.

Putting it all together, Andrew thought: “Maybe ... maybe ... this man is ... God.”

Jesus didn’t wait for certainty, from Andrew or anyone else.

If he sensed there was still doubt in Andrew or in the others it didn’t stop him from saying these words:

“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.

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,

And teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.

And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

This Great Commission, this sending out into the world,

May have revealed other doubts in Andrew and his fellow disciples.

Doubts like: “What if I’m not good enough?

What if my faith isn’t strong enough?”

The Good News for Andrew,

And for all of us,

Is that there is something we can be completely certain of, something we cannot doubt:

We don't have to be doubt-free to be disciples.

We don't have to have perfect faith to be loved, forgiven and sent out into the world.

Jesus says, "All authority on heaven and on earth has been given to me."

Because Jesus has the authority, we are forgiven and freed.

Our doubts, and all our others sins, are not held against us.

Jesus says, "Remember: I am with you always, to the end of the age."

These are words of comfort for the first disciples and for us, today.

Jesus did not and will not abandon the world.

Jesus will not abandon you.

God sent the Holy Spirit to be our source of hope, faith and inspiration--

To make it possible for us to do the work of disciples in the world:

Healing, teaching, and telling the Good News of Jesus.

You may be wondering how any of this applies to you, in your daily life.

You might think of this text as mostly applying to ordained pastors especially since it talks about baptism in such a specific way.

Even if you've never baptized someone

The way you live your life as a disciple

May lead others to be baptized

Or it may make other Christians remember that they are baptized, and remember how much that means to them.

I'll give you a few examples.

I worked this year as a religion professor at the Evangelical Lyceum in Bratislava.

I taught mostly 17-year-old students from different religious backgrounds.

Throughout the year I watched as my students lived out Christ's Great Commission without even realizing they were doing it.

I observed students giving Bible verses to friends who were going through difficult times in their lives.

Students invited each other to church and to youth group and took leadership roles at weekly school chapel services.

And many students sought me out to talk about difficult questions of faith, to talk about their doubts, and to pray.

These students probably wouldn't immediately see themselves in those 11 disciples who gathered to hear the first Great Commission.

And yet, like me and like all of you, there is much in common.

Like Andrew and the first disciples, we, as disciples today, may have doubts about our own ability to serve God and others.

It's true that we can't accomplish anything on our own—we're just too sinful.

The Good News is that we are given strength by the Holy Spirit, and our efforts are multiplied by Christ.

We imagined Andrew doubting—trying to figure out the death and resurrection of Christ.

Likewise, our faith itself may be weak and faltering.

In fact, Martin Luther writes that all human faith is like this.

Faith is also a gift from God, that comes from the Holy Spirit working through the Word of God that we hear, and the Holy Meal that we eat.

We are commissioned, we are made disciples not because of how good we are,

How talented we are,

Or even how strong our faith is.

We are made disciples by what God has done:

By the forgiveness given through Christ and by the power of the Holy Spirit.

That means that Jesus' words on the mountain in Galilee aren't just for Andrew,

They're for us.

Through this Great Commission we are made disciples and through it we are sent out

to make disciples of all nations.

You don't have to be perfect

You don't have to be doubt-free

You just have to be loved, forgiven, and empowered by God.

You just have to be ... you.

So these words are a commission, a sending-out, for you:

All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Jesus Christ.

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,

And teaching them to obey all of Christ's commandments.

And remember, Jesus is with you always, to the end of the age.

Amen.

