

## “Go”

*2 Corinthians 13:11, 13-14, Matthew 28:7, 9-10, 18-20, John 4:21, 23 16:6*

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**Prayer for Understanding** Ever-present God, open our hearts to your healing word, our minds to your informing word and our souls to your renewing word. Amen

The resurrected Jesus commands us to go and remember God is with us always. The final chapter of Matthew commands us to go three times. On Easter the angel at the empty tomb told the women: **Matthew 28:7 “Go quickly and tell Jesus’ disciples Jesus has been raised from the dead and God is going ahead of you... You will see God.” Matthew 28:9-10 “Jesus met them...and said. Do not be afraid! Go tell my siblings to leave for Galilee. They will see me.” Matthew 28:18-20 “Jesus came and said to them, “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 that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always.”**

Pastor and Bible Professor Rolf Jacobson echoes insight from numerous theologians that the critical, most important verb of priority in the great commission is “go”. Go out into the world and God will be with you. Focusing on “go” shifts us from our mission, the church’s mission, to God’s mission. Before we get to discipling, baptizing, and teaching we need to dwell for a long, long time on “go” and always keep “go” as the primary aspect of God’s mission. When we dwell on “go”, we see God’s mission. The church finds its identity when we participant in the mission of God. In order to partner with God in God’s mission, we must go. We are not to wait for others to come to us. We are not to convert others to our way of speaking, thinking, and believing. God’s mission is for us to go out into the world and there we will meet God. God is already there. God is ahead of us. God is in the goodness of every person. God is in the goodness of all cultures, languages, literature, art, and music. We are to go and meet God in everyone, in every aspect of life, to be curious, explore finding every aspect of goodness, love, joy and peace. Pastor Eugene Petterson frequently said: “We meet God in the neighborhood.” Rolf said: “It is not that the church has a mission, rather God has a mission and God’s mission has a church. We are a part of God’s mission. We do not bring God to the world. God is already in the world. God is ahead of us on a mission to love, save, bless, and be reconciled to all of creation. God is active in the world getting that mission done. We find out who we are when we go, participating in what God is already doing, love, save, bless, and be reconciled to the whole world. For far too long we have thought that we have a mission, that we hold God in our congregations, that we are to give others God by discipling, baptizing, and teaching.” Rolf continues: “That is not what the great commission says. Jesus says “go” get into the neighborhood where God is active, on the move, and get involved in what God is doing in the neighborhood. When we get out there, participating in the mission of God we will find out who we are, we will find our identity, as God’s beloved. We will find out what God is doing in the world and in our lives. We need to learn to be guests, to sleep at other’s homes, to eat other’s food, to explore the ways of others.” Rolf shares a personal reflection: “I am not comfortable with going and being a guest of others. I am much more comfortable being the host. Being the one who is providing hospitality and food. I would rather others come to my house even though it is more work and costs me more. Why? Because I know what I like to eat, how comfortable I am, the music I enjoy, the art I like around me. Sometimes transformative happens when we go out, when we make ourselves the guests of others, go to a strange culture, eat their food, go to their home, get used to their smells, listen to their music, art and listen to what God is doing in their lives. It is promised God goes ahead of us. That is what the church is supposed to do to discover our identity. The Holy Spirit is ahead of you. The theme of the book of Acts is “go”. God sends the church to the ends of the earth. Throughout the book of Acts God is already ahead of the church. As we go and participate in the mission of God in our neighborhood we will discover our identity.” End quote.

We like to be in control, in power, have our beliefs embraced by others, and have others join our way of life. Be a curious explorer, wrestle to accept or reject this: Is the Christian Church in the United States struggling to attract members because we, the church, are distorting the great commission? Thinking we have God, we must share God, make disciples like us, baptize how we perceive baptism and teach our perspectives

interwoven with our culture and politics. Are we struggling to see that God is ahead of us? Is God already in the lives of those outside the church? Is God already in other cultures, religions, and every aspect of the cosmos? Are we to go, listen to others, perceive how God is loving in their lives and then celebrate that God is loving in everyone? Is God's church grander than our limited definition? Is God's church a mystery in which all people are already a member? Does the command to "go" have little to do with imposing our perspective and much to do with perceiving the glory of God in everyone?

Jesus is compassion. Jesus listened and healed often before any teaching and without requiring any belief or religious participation. Jesus met people where they were at, spoke in their language, their religion, and their life experiences. Jesus' teaching often involved pointing out where God was already lovingly present.

In the fourth chapter of the good news of John, Jesus goes and spends time with a woman from a different culture worshiping through the Samaritan religion. They have a conversation about where God is already present in her life, living water, and different religions. Jesus said: **John 4:21, 23** **"The time is coming when it will no longer matter whether you worship God here or in Jerusalem. True worshipers will worship God in spirit and truth."** How do we worship in spirit and truth? There are myriads of answers. Perhaps worshiping in spirit and truth is expanding worship beyond church to everywhere for God is already ahead of us and is loving everywhere, expanding from rigid rituals to diverse, spontaneous worship. Perhaps worshiping in truth is living true to oneself, true to the unique way God created each person, and not distorting your truth by conforming to the majority, true to the unique way God forms a relationship with each person to perfectly connect to each person's unique personality, true to authentic communication in the preferred language of each person. Perhaps worshipping in spirit flows from each person's good image of God and each person's essence which is a temple for the Holy Spirit. Jesus said: **John 16:6** **"I am the truth."** Worshipping in truth is a loving relationship with God and a loving relationship with everyone. What does worshipping in spirit and truth mean to you?

Jesus baptizes the woman at the well in an unconventional way through a conversation in which Jesus pointed out where God has been loving her throughout her life. Jesus describes God's active, loving, joyful, peaceful presence in our lives as living water. The past tense of "go" is went. The woman went and told others that Jesus told her everything she ever did, explaining how God loved her throughout her life. Those who heard this begged Jesus to stay with them. Jesus did not ask any of them to come to him, nor follow a particular teaching, nor go to a place to worship. Jesus went to them and explained how God has always been pouring living water into their lives.

We are to encourage each other and live in peaceful harmony with grace, love, and communion. The Apostle Paul wrote: **2 Corinthians 13:11, 13-14** **"Be restored and joyful. Grow to maturity. Encourage each other. Live in harmony and peace. The God of love and peace will be with you. The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all."**

We are to "go" with grace, love, and communion. Grace is endless forgiveness, freely given love, unmerited belonging, undeserved glory, and a gift of transformation from brokenness to wholeness. We are to "go" with grace, love, and communion. The Apostle Paul describes love as active, selfless and enduring relationships with God and all people. Love is patient. Love is kind. Love is respectful. Love yields one's own way to embrace the ways of others. Love is humble. Love is calm. Love is sanctuary. Love experiences every moment as a fresh opportunity. Love rejoices in truth. Love is enduring, perseveres, and hopes. Love is permanent. Love expands forever. Love is the self-giving of Creator God made visible in the Redeemer Jesus through the Sustainer Holy Spirit. We are to "go" with grace, love, and communion. Communion is community, sharing, and affirming good. Communion is universally flourishing. Communion is going to the homes of others to fellowship and share meals, the bread of life and the cup of forgiveness. Communion is connection and relationship with God and all people.

Today is Trinity Sunday. Have you noticed our Triune God in our scriptures? Matthew declares we are to go in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. In John's account of Jesus with the woman, we have Jesus, God the living water flowing in every person and the Spirit that enables us to worship God. The Apostle Paul explains the God of love and peace is with us through the grace of Jesus, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit.

Madeleine L'Engle wrote: "The Trinity is incomprehensible and the Trinity proclaims a unity that in this fragmented world we desperately need. We are mortals. We need to know each other and love each other. The

Trinity, like any other concept about God, is no more than that, a concept, inadequate; a groping attempt to explain wholeness to a fragmented race of mortals. The Trinity is also an attempt to explain Jesus' state of being both holy human and holy divine. We do not understand our own wholeness. We are beginning to realize how our minds and our bodies interact. The Trinity is an icon for us, to help us see God's love and God's calling of each of us into completeness."

Pastor Eric Funston preached: "The Trinity is not a puzzle to be solved, a statement to be explained, an axiom to be proven. Is the beauty of a rose something to be solved? No, it is merely the inherent nature of a rose to be beautiful. Is the love between spouses something to be explained? I have presided at more than enough weddings to assure you that marital love is nearly always inexplicable; it simply has to be experienced. Can you prove the majesty of great symphony? The triune relationship of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is the same sort of thing; it is the inherent nature of God, a mystery to be experienced not a formula to be explained."

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