

**Living the Nativity**  
**Matthew 28:19-20**

**January 7, 2018**

18 And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.  
19 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, 20 and teaching them to obey everything that I have  
commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

Today is the first Sunday after Epiphany. The day of Epiphany is January six. It is a Greek word that means manifestation or appearance. It is the manifestation of Christ - the mass of Christ. The Magi went on a long journey after the birth of Christ that probably took them months to complete. They traveled to seek out and worship the new King of the Jews - the Lord.

The title today is "Living the Nativity" it is in contrast to "The Living Nativity." The Living Nativity is a reenactment of the manger scene. Today the talk is about Living the Nativity instead of the Living Nativity. Living the Nativity is putting ourselves into the story. Living the Nativity is living for Christ. Whereas, we celebrate the birth of a baby. But what is significant is much more meaningful. We are rejoicing in the arrival of the one who came to seek and save the lost. We rejoice because God came here to rescue us.

In the Scripture Jesus came to the disciples and said all authority has been given to him. And he told them to go and make disciples and baptize them and teach them to obey everything. This is the post resurrected Jesus. He explains his position - all authority has been given to him. So, this mandate to the disciples is authoritative. This is very significant. It is an official order, a commission, a commandment. The Christians are followers of Christ and are to be obedient to his instructions. We are to do what Christ tells us to do.

This is our calling - our disciple responsibility. It is very serious and it is not as our culture depicts it today. We are to go; not sit idle. We are to continue the divine mission of Christ who made disciples and commands us to continue. We are to make disciples. The goal of Jesus was global discipleship. The disciple is a believer and a follower and takes action and lives the Gospel.

We are to baptize. Baptism is a sacrament. It is something that we are told by Jesus to do. Baptism signifies that we belong to him. We are to teach them - not just teach them - notice Jesus said to teach them to obey everything that he has commanded. We are not just to teach them about Jesus, who he is, what he said, what he did; we are to teach them to obey everything that he has commanded. This means everything - baptism, communion, forgiveness, humility, the list goes on. We are all called to teach people to obey the word. We are called to teach people to abide by the sacraments. We are called to obey everything Jesus has commanded. It takes study and commitment and complete surrender. The Christian is a Christ like state of being.

So today we have our installation of officers. The elected leaders make a commitment to the church (to faithfully fulfill their duties) and to God. The congregation also makes a commitment to the leaders (to encourage and assist) and to God. The ideal is that the church accomplishes what Christ has called us to do...to make obedient disciples. The word of Christ is our central message. We have centered based theology that is centered on Christ. We do not have societal centered theology, which is institutionalism and feel good messages.

The primary goal of ministry is discipleship. Leaders of congregation have the divine mission to go and make disciples. The members of the congregation have the divine mission to go and make disciples. All Christians have the divine mission to go and make disciples. This

takes a powerful commitment that many cannot, or do not, obey. The goal is discipleship - it is living the Christian life - a life molded after Christ. This is Living the Nativity.

I remind all church leaders with emphasis. Focus on pleasing God. Do not focus on pleasing people or doing what is popular. Do not worry about the institution, attendance numbers, or finances. Focus on pleasing God. That is our divine purpose. Living the nativity is action that pleases God. Live your life that makes pleasing God your top priority. That is one sentence that I think is good to take the time to write down. Live your life that makes pleasing God your top priority.

I have some advice. When confronted with conflict and complaints ask this question. What does this (whatever is bothering you) have to do with pleasing God? You see, conflict and complaints are not about pleasing God. Conflict and complaints are virtually always about something does not suit me, or does not go my way. The root of all conflict is self centered instead of Christ centered.

I want you to see this image. Let us pause and take the time to allow this image to work its way into our consciousness. See this image. Jesus hung high in the air on the cross. It is a public display of brutality. He is tormented and tortured. He is in far worse shape than the criminals beside him because he has been beaten with a whip. He is bleeding from where chunks of flesh have been torn from his body and thrones are digging into his head, wrapped all the way around his head. See the image of blood dripping down his body from head down to feet. See Jesus there suffering in pain and agony. Stand there at the foot of the cross. Look up into the eyes of suffering, dyeing, Savior. Make your appeal to him there at the foot of the cross. Tell him that you are not happy with whatever it is, what someone else said, did, hurt my feelings, didn't get my way, whatever. Take selfish pettiness and place it at the foot of the cross. Take your appeal to the head of the church, Jesus Christ, and look up into the eyes of the suffering dying Savior.

It is when you stand at the foot of the cross and look up into the eyes of the suffering Savior that you live the nativity. It is then you realize that all of our stuff is really insignificant. We have to obey Jesus. Go now and make disciples, baptize them, and teach them to obey everything. Teach them to live the nativity.