

*16 Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. 17 When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. 18 Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19 Therefore go 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 I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."*

People ask: "Who is God?" Some genuinely want to know. Others wonder how anyone can know. Still others invent their own answers.

The Bible everywhere explains: there is one God, and no other. Jesus describes who our one God is here in vs.19: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. There may be no more well-known passage that in such brevity gives witness to the truth that our God is Triune: God is 3-in-1 [three persons in one God]. Jesus gives clear expression to this. He mentions all three persons by name. At the same time, when Jesus refers to "the name" in vs.19, it is one: not "the names," but "the name" - one.

That's who God is: 3 persons in 1 God.

Look at the context around that. You find another brilliant truth about our God. Jesus tells his disciples the tools our God uses to bring people into a relationship with Him. What do we learn about God from this? He's relational. He craves and rejoices in connection, in closeness, with people whom he has made. This is true in spite of the fact that after the Fall into sin we would have forever remained a horde of outcast people, dead-set against Him – if He had not intervened.

What length God went to, in order to make the Way for us to enjoy eternity with Him in His Heavenly Kingdom! Look at His name and you have built in reminders: God the Father gave His one and only Son – God the Son become flesh, Immanuel, God with us. Why would God do this, make himself like us in every way but without sin? Why would God dwell among us, experiencing life in this sin-ravaged world? Why would God take the wages of our sin, the punishment of death & the curse of hell we deserved? Why? God utilized the only Way possible to rescue us –Himself.

And now He, Jesus, stood before his disciples and so clearly laid out the answer for: How does one come to know Him?

God the Holy Spirit brought you to believe through baptism and through hearing God's Word. These are the tools he uses to create faith in human hearts, and with faith he brings: forgiveness, new life and salvation.

Be warned: The truths I've just shared with you are very controversial. Jesus sounds a warning many other times. There is a very real clash that occurs when Christianity comes into contact with the popular ideologies of our world. They are competing for influence over hearts & minds. In the paper presented at the District Convention this past week, Prof. Korthals shared: Lessons from the History of the Christian Church for Modern Christians. Hostility and intolerance toward Christian beliefs has spanned the centuries. Often it has been in the form of physical persecution. But not all opposition attempts to physically smash Christians & Christianity. Prof. Korthals highlights this in our setting. He wrote:

“In current American culture, you are free to be a Christian as long as you don't actually live out your faith, ..., take a stand in relation to your faith, or believe others should embrace your faith. In other words, your faith can be privately engaging, but must remain socially irrelevant.”

And he goes on:

“There is real concern that the growing insistence that faith be privatized has now been turned into a demand for faith to be compromised. ...you must also embrace society's beliefs. The opposition to many Christian truths has become an 'if you're not with us, you're against us' mentality.”

Jesus tells us to guard everything that he has taught us. Everything in the Bible is God's. It's all true. It's all important. So what about when – not “if,” “when” – you face opposition from the world for holding to these truths? No one giving an honest evaluation is going to sugarcoat the great tension that exists.

The main point of contention is: no one wants to believe they're so badly off that they are totally lost and they need a Savior.

So with the level of contention we face: How are you – little you, and frail me – supposed to hold on?

Jesus has 2 comforting and empowering truths to share with you for facing such times. First, Jesus assures you: *“I am with you always.”* If he is with each and every one of you – always - , then he also is everywhere. In such simple words the truth shines out: He is all-present.

And in equally uncomplicated words, He declares to us: *“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.”* He is true God, who holds power over all. What great news for us!

You see how that directly impacts your daily life. Right? The Lord will remain with you. And He is in charge. Nothing is going to happen on His watch that He hasn't allowed. He has his good purposes in mind for you, as an individual, and for His Church as a whole. And nothing can stand in the way of that. Don't be afraid. What can man do to you! The Lord knows how to take care of you, and will, in life and through death.

Praise the Lord!

That's just what the disciples do. They worship the One who has given them something greater than the world – heaven! You and I see Jesus with the eyes of faith and join to worship Him. In the face of the world's opposition, we worship our God – Father, Son and Holy Spirit. He is our Savior Lord. There is no other. We worship with our prayers, which express our trust in Him. We worship as we listen to His Word. We worship as we treasure what He says, as we guard it, as we defend against the attacks that attempt to rip away from us any morsel of His truth.

We also worship our God by sharing his treasure with the world: even as people give opposition. Jesus gives a simple and great commission to us, his people: *“Going, make disciples of all nations...”*

That, dear friends, is the heart of God spilling out on paper! How does he feel about all people? He cares equally as much for every individual in the world. All people are sinners. All have souls. All need the cure for sin that comes alone through Jesus.

God has an awesome service and purpose for us to carry out... Tell those who are still lost in the world, who are still far off from him. He wants them to be His own too. He wants nothing more than to bring each of them into his family.

Understand, as you go boldly forward with an increased mission zeal that flows from Jesus' great commission, prepare for increased hostility from the world. I gave the quote earlier: in

America “you are free to be a Christian.” But let that be known, and you can be a target of derision. You’ll face even more when you are active in sharing God’s uncompromising truth.

One of the devotion themes from the Convention this past week touched on this. The theme was: faith that is coupled with love. So many people today will simply not accept those as going together. People’s perception is: if you hold to a faith in an absolute truth from God, you are an unloving person – you are judgmental. And the opposite is true in their mind: if you are loving, you’ll accept all other ideas.

To take the stance that there is one true God, and He is the only way to Heaven, is a “lighting rod” posture. At least, that is, if you’re in any substantial way coupling that with the love to share God’s truth with those you encounter and engage in conversation and friendship.

You may think of times you’ve been timid to speak. We get so worried what other people might think about us.” Notice where the attention is? Self. You may identify ways you’ve failed to prioritize God’s truth in your own life – let alone taking time to share it into someone else’s. Or, maybe it’s the “all nations” part. You may have no problem going to someone who shares the same background, but you may have a hard time getting out of your comfort zone and truly finding out about another person who seems so foreign to you. Again, where is the attention centered? Self.

What an awesome Lord! He has the authority to say to you and me, and he does: “Your sins are forgiven you” (Ma. 9:6). He has shown the authority to reduce demons to beggars (Mt.8:31,34). We know His authority to call thousands of angels to do his bidding (Matt.26:53). Yet he chooses you to share his message with the world!

Rejoice in His forgiveness. Rest in his care. And go - he gives you a mission – tell of His love – share His truth with “all nations.”