

## Only the Beginning – 5/1/2017

It's a little cliché to write about new beginnings around the time for graduation, but nevertheless it's a good time to think about such things.

“Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. And when they saw him they worshiped him, but some doubted. And 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, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

-- Matthew 28:16-20

In the end of the Gospel accounts, Jesus gives his apostles the Great Commission. They had gone out by themselves to preach the coming of the kingdom of heaven, but this command was different for two reasons:

- 1) Jesus had died and was resurrected
- 2) They were told to go into “all” the world

Their mission was different now; no longer were they to be simply followers of the Christ, they were called to be leaders of the cause of Christ. Simply put, the apostles had completed their training and were now expected to be at the forefront advancing the cause of Christ.

When moving from one phase of life to the next, whether it be from high school to college, or college to a job, or from one job to another, there is a shift in the expectations laid on your shoulders. This is a good thing, but very rarely does it come without stress. Over the last few months I have been in a state of uncertainty over my decision to go to graduate school. During that time there have been many nights that I laid awake questioning if I was following the right path. There are many others who, when faced with a decision regarding a new job, encounter many of the same questions: is this the path God has for me to follow? Is this the best path for me to provide for myself and my (future) family? Is there a better road I could take?

Having faith in these periods of life can be difficult. But turn again to the example of the Apostles. They had been instructed to wait for a signal that they had received the power of God. This event would not happen for seven weeks after the resurrection on the day of Pentecost. In that time, the Apostles were not idle.

“All these with one accord were devoting themselves to prayer, together with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and his brothers.”

-- Acts 1:14

Then in the following verses the writer of Acts tells how the Apostles appointed Matthias to fill the place of Judas in order to fulfill the scriptures. While I don't know how long it was between the ascension of Jesus and the day of Pentecost, I can imagine that each day that passed only caused the Apostles' anxiety to grow as they waited on the promise to be fulfilled. Then when the day arrived and the Apostles were given power from the Holy Spirit, where were they? The first verse of Acts 2 tells us that they were all together. They had not abandoned the work and were ready to preach the Word when called on.

Not everyone needs to be a pulpit minister, but everyone needs to be ready to serve the Lord where they are. In our periods of worry and stress, we need to pause and remember the providence of God.

“For my thoughts are not your thoughts,  
neither are your ways my ways, declares the Lord.  
For as the heavens are higher than the earth,  
so are my ways higher than your ways  
and my thoughts than your thoughts.”  
-- Isaiah 55:8-9

God's plan is better than ours, and His Will will be carried out. Our focus should not so much be on where we believe He wants us to go, but on whether we're ready to serve Him where we are. If we aren't ready to serve Him now, what leads us to believe that something besides ourselves can change that? The problem stems from within us. We have to commit our lives to God today, not tomorrow, not next week, not next year, right now!

If the path you are on is not where He means for you to be, it will become plain with time; but in the moment, examine how you can serve him where you are. As the Apostles discovered, their time with Jesus on earth was only the beginning of their walk in life. Right now, wherever you are in life, it is only the beginning. You have a chance to commit your life to God and serve Him where you are. Be ready right now to serve the Lord.

“But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you will be blessed. Have no fear of them, nor be troubled, but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect,”  
-- 1 Peter 3:14-15

- Jacob