

There's a risk in current Christology. There's a big word. Christology. It's the study of Christ. If Theology is the study of God, Christology is the study of Christ. In some current Christology there is a risk that in our rush to make the Pre-Easter Jesus fully human, we want to make him ordinary. We want to make the pre-Easter Jesus as ordinary as you and me. The risk is that we want to bring Jesus "down" to our level.

But I want to say, Jesus is anything but ordinary. In fact the pre-Easter Jesus sets the bar for being human pretty high. His connection to the divine ultimate reality he called father was so attuned, that the church still describes his marvelous human works, miraculous. But his words echo in our hearts. Pointing to his own ministry he says to his disciples "Greater things than these shall you do in my name." This is not a call to ordinariness. This is what Neale Donald Walsch describes as a call into the next greatest version of the grandest vision we ever had about ourselves. Some of us move into that light, some of us recoil.

And the other annoying thing about Jesus not being ordinary is that he is pretty unequivocal. He doesn't mince words. He is not circumspect. He doesn't beat around the bush. And he's unequivocal about the bigger picture. He leaves it up to us to figure out the nitty gritty details in the bigger picture he calls us to.

Today's text is no different. Here we are at the end of Matthew's gospel. This is the last appearance of the post-Easter Jesus. We are in Galilee. This is where Jesus' ministry began. It's like he's bringing his disciples right back to the beginning. He's brought them here to help them remember the point of his ministry. And we're at the top of a mountain. To the reader this is biblical code. The words we are about to read are profoundly true. And the events may have happened. The words we are about to hear, at this foundational place of beginning again, are cosmic, timeless, unequivocal.

And what does Jesus say? I love how Eugene Patterson re-writes this text in his book "The Message." Listen again to the story, and notice.

"Meanwhile, the eleven disciples were on their way to Galilee, headed for the mountain Jesus had set for their reunion. The moment they saw him they worshiped him. Some, though, held back, not sure about *worship*, about risking themselves totally."

Oh my goodness....doesn't that describe the contemporary mainline church today. Some disciples are on their way back to the beginning, wanting to start from the over,

encountering the risen one again for the first time. Some rejoice and worship and give up their lives for the sake of the gospel. Others aren't so sure about risking themselves totally. They hold back.

But the risen Christ doesn't stop, the Spirit moves beyond their limitations to find where the ground is fertile. Listen in again, to the Message.

¹⁸⁻²⁰ Jesus, undeterred, went right ahead and gave his charge: "God authorized and commanded me to commission you: Go out and train everyone you meet, far and near, in this way of life, marking them by baptism in the threefold name: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Then instruct them in the practice of all I have commanded you.

Undeterred, it says. Do you hear that clarity and authority. God commanded me to commission you. This is your job, he says. There is no other job. Go out and train everyone you meet, far and near in this way of life, marking them by baptism in the the trinity. Then instruct them in the practice of all I have commanded you."

Again, unequivocal, clear, direct! Train people in this way of life, mark them by baptism, and instruct them in this counter-cultural, revolutionary, sacrificial way of life. Nothing about building and preserving churches. Nothing about running hospitals. Nothing about maintaining investment portfolios.

"Train people in this way of life, mark them by baptism, and instruct them in this counter-cultural, revolutionary, sacrificial way of life. I'll be with you as you do this, day after day after day, right up to the end of the age."

It's fascinating that this comes to us on the day of our annual meeting. I don't know about you, but I always feel a little anxious on this day. I have felt this way on AGM day since I joined the church when I was 21. Something about this day makes good and faithful people anxious and worried. Lots of hand wringing happens at the annual meeting.

As we move into the deliberations of our annual meeting today. I invite you to let this commission, the clarity of Jesus' direction to land our your hearts today. If at anytime in this day, you become uncertain about what to do next, if you're uncertain about where we should be going, I invite you to let these final words from the gospel of Matthew to take precedence over everything. "Train people in this way of life, mark them by baptism, and instruct them in this counter-cultural, revolutionary, sacrificial way of life and I'll be with you as you do." Amen