***Ephesians 1:2-14 Matthew 28:16-20 June 15, 2014***

***Trinity Sunday/Baptism***

***Preached by Philip Gladden at the Wallace Presbyterian Church, Wallace, NC***

IT’S GO TIME!

***Let us pray: Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable to you, O Lord, our rock and our***

***redeemer. Amen.***

“It’s go time!”

That was the title and theme of Mrs. Janice Wynn’s baccalaureate sermon last Sunday night at Wallace Rose Hill High School.

“It’s go time! It’s go time to put into practice what you have learned in your thirteen years of school — whether you’re going on to college, to serve in the military, or to enter the workforce. It’s go time to remember who taught you what you know and helped you get where you are today. It’s go time to do new things, but don’t forget that all us are here for you, always.”

“It’s go time!”

That is the theme of Jesus’ Great Commission to his disciples on the mountaintop in Galilee.

“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, to the end of the age.” (Matthew 28:18-20)

“It’s go time! Go, and put into practice what you have learned from me. Make disciples of all the people. Show them what it means to live as my followers. Baptize them in the mighty name of God and welcome them to a new life. Teach them everything you’ve learned from me. And don’t forget — I am ***always*** with you.”

On this happy occasion when we baptize Leah Katherine and Amelia Grace, it’s go time! A few minutes ago I asked you to remember and renew your own baptisms. By doing so, you recall Jesus’ call in your life to be his faithful disciple and God’s promise to give you everything you need to do what Jesus Christ asks you to do.

After years and years of reading the Great Commission story in Matthew 28, I had an eye-opening experience this week. This just goes to show how God’s Word is always the ***living Word***. Jesus tells his disciples (then and now), “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations . . .” Jesus doesn’t say, “Go therefore and ***save*** all nations . . .” Salvation is God’s work alone. Discipling and sharing our faith with other people so they can experience God’s salvation — that is our calling.

If the idea of discipling “all nations” is too daunting, let’s narrow it down a little bit. Think about the questions Andrew and Mary Kate answered as they presented their daughters for baptism. Two in particular asked them about their commitment to “disciple” their girls and to teach them about God:

Do you now unreservedly promise, in humble reliance upon God’s grace, to set before Amelia and Leah an example of the new life in Christ?

Do you promise to pray with and for them and to bring them up in the knowledge and love of God?

Now, think about the promises you made as part of the baptismal service:

Do we, the members of this congregation, in the name of the whole Church of Jesus Christ, undertake with Andrew and Mary Kate the Christian nurture of Amelia and Leah, so that in due time they may confess faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior?

Will we endeavor by our example and fellowship to strengthen their family ties with the household of God?

Every one of these questions has “action verbs” — set before; pray with and for them; bring them up; undertake; confess; endeavor; strengthen. Every one of Jesus’ instructions to his disciples (then and now) has “action verbs” — go; make; baptize; teach; remember.

This baptism Sunday is also Trinity Sunday on the church calendar.

We began by being called to worship God our Creator who calls us all, Christ our risen Savior who guides us all, and the Holy, Holy, Holy Spirit who moves us to action.

We praised God with our opening hymn: “Baptized in water, Sealed by the Spirit, Marked with the sign of Christ, our King; Born of the Spirit, We are God’s children, Joyfully now God’s praises we sing.”

In grateful response to God’s grace and forgiveness through Jesus Christ, we sang “Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost.”

We affirmed our faith with believers through the centuries: “I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and in Jesus Christ his only Son our Lord. I believe in the Holy Ghost.”

I put water on Leah’s and Amelia’s heads and said, “Child of the covenant, I baptize you in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.”

We asked for God’s illumination as we listen to God’s Word, “through Jesus Christ, the Word made flesh, who was raised and now reigns in the power of your Holy Spirit.”

We heard Jesus’ command to baptize “in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.”

We will sing our thanksgiving to God for his wonderful gifts and say, “Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.”

And, as happens every Sunday morning, we will be sent out with these words of blessing: “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with all of you.”

We don’t extol the virtues of some “Greater Being” or “First Principle.”

We don’t sign a consent form, simply agreeing intellectually with a set of theological ideas about an ultimate source.

We don’t gather to worship some “Unknown God” who may or may not love us, who may or may not be involved with us, who may or may not make himself known to us, who may or may not have a purpose for our lives and for this world.

No, on this baptism and Trinity Sunday, there’s a reason we sing and pray and praise and proclaim “one God in three ***persons***.” “Here we are to worship, here we are to bow down, here we are to say that you’re our God. You’re altogether lovely, altogether worthy, altogether wonderful to us.”

A “First Principle” doesn’t say, “I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

A mere intellectual assent to some dogma won’t give us the passion and the gifts we need to go out in Jesus’ name and do what he calls us to do.

An “Unknown God” who may or may not have a purpose for our lives and our world will not send us out to make disciples and to love in his name.

As someone has said, when we follow Jesus Christ, we are not converted to a philosophy, but to a unique way of living together in the Messiah’s community.

And living together in the Messiah’s community means going, making disciples, baptizing, teaching, remembering, loving, giving, praising, worshiping . . .

This week I read a wonderful sermon by Dr. James B. Lemler, pastor of the Christ Church Episcopal in Greenwich, Connecticut. His sermon title was “Blah, Blah, Blah, Blah . . . Love.” He ended his sermon with this story about a family in the church, who discussed his Sunday sermon over lunch.

“I had a couple of parents telling me the story about their family’s Sunday morning experience of a sermon that I had preached. They had gone home and during Sunday lunch were talking about my sermon (something that warms the heart of a pastor to be sure). In the midst of their conversation, the second-grade daughter sitting at the table chimed in. “Oh, Father Lemler’s sermons, they’re always the same. You know . . . blah, blah, blah . . . love.” Well I was amused and thought to myself, “Hey, this little girl really got it . . . the message, the repetition, the core, the redundancy.”

Dr. Lemler says, “And so it is with the Holy Trinity . . . the message, the repetition, the core, the redundancy. Over and over again . . . “Blah, blah, blah, love . . .”

God the Creator . . . I love you and give you life.

God the Redeemer . . . I love you and embrace you in that love forever.

God the Spirit . . . I love you and warm your heart and your soul with my love.

Blah, blah, blah, love . . . I welcome you to that love. I enfold you in that love. I hold you forever and ever in that love.

And for our part . . . we are called to believe it. We are called to proclaim it. We are called to invite people into it. We are called to embrace and be embraced by it.

Blah, blah, blah . . . love . . . In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.”1

And to that let me add, “It’s go time!”

Go . . . believe, proclaim, invite, embrace, be embraced, live, witness, disciple, teach . . . love.

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

***Let us pray: Holy God, Three in One, you are our eternal hope, our companion in life, our liberating power. Lead us in your mission, baptizing and teaching in your blessed name,***

***so that all may worship you to the end of the age. Amen.***

NOTES

1James B. Lemler, “Blah, Blah, Blah, Blah . . . Love,” Matthew 28:16-20, at [www.day1.org](http://www.day1.org).