

## **SERMON**

Pastor Cris Frigm

“Your God is too small.”

I want to acknowledge that this isn't my phrase and the person who brought it to me in a timely fashion is here in the room. So, thank you to them for putting a throughline into my sermon for this week.

It's the perfect exhortation for us as we celebrate Trinity Sunday. It's the perfect approach to a concept that is truly so far beyond human comprehension that it defies all those who try to nail it down. If you think you've figured out how we can define a Trinitarian God, I assure you, “your God is too small.”

The disciples had only begun to glimpse how small their definition of God had been when they gathered on a mountain in Galilee to wait for the arrival of the resurrected Jesus. This is, in fact, the Easter appearance – the only one – that Matthew offers of the risen Lord. The women at the tomb had met the angels who told them to tell the disciples to go to the mountain to see Jesus – no longer dead, but very much alive.

The same mountain where, after calling the disciples together, Jesus taught them and the crowds what God was asking of them. The beatitudes and all the exposition on the law that followed likely happened on this very same mountain. Jesus calls them back there to give them one last moment of glory and promise. “I am alive and bear the full authority of God in heaven and on earth,” he tells them. “I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

End scene.

Quickly followed by human fallibility which turns the promise of God and the gospel message of the resurrected Christ into a to do list of how you become part of the church. Your God is too small.

That's pretty much how I've always heard this passage used. Well-meaning communities of faith, of all sizes and types, throughout history have heard the imperative. "Go...make disciples...baptize...teach them to obey." But our God is too small. Historically, we've taken this commission to make disciples and turned it into a way to control anyone who doesn't agree with us. We've heard this incredibly good news that God is with us to the end of the age and made it a message about trying to stay out of eternal fire by following the straight and narrow.

These words have sparked genocide in the past and in the present...in the name of making disciples...in the name of the Prince of Peace.

What if we **don't** make our God too small? What if we take ourselves back up onto that mountain and really listen to what God is saying. Listening to what God has said from the very beginning. Everything that God has "commanded you" takes on a specific and intentional lens when it comes from the Messiah, the Christ, the incarnate Living Word.

On this mountain, Jesus proclaimed the blessedness of peacemaking, the blessedness of mercy, the blessedness of humility. He told those who followed him that they were the light of the world. He told them that he had fulfilled the law and went on to all the ways the people of the covenant had taken the life-giving law of God and turned it into a series of gotcha moments. He told them to love their enemies and turn the other cheek.

And when he calls them back to that same mountain so he can offer them one more moment of teaching, he tells them to embody **his** life-giving fulfillment to the world.

We hear it as an imperative. Go, do, make. But the Greek structure of these words has a nuance to it. There is only one command in these instructions. Only one time does Jesus use an imperative to tell the disciples what is coming next...teach. Make disciples. That's the imperative in these instructions. In English, it comes across as a list of things to do if we're going to

follow Jesus. But it's full of verb participles. It's full of description not of what we do, but who we are.

We are the ones who are going. We are the ones who are baptizing. We are the ones who are obeying. It's a subtle distinction in grammar, but it's a large difference in how we follow. It makes a difference in recognizing just how big our God truly is.

It means that we're always moving, not trying to hold fast to some created ideal of our own, but adapting to what is revealed to us as we are going. It means we are baptizing, not as a rite of initiation into our prescribed faith practices, but acknowledging that God is at work in the lives of those we encounter. It means we are obeying, not judging how others behave, but always seeking to live out what God has said to **us**, trusting that God is at work in us to transform us into the disciples we've been called to be.

In our following, we know that we are never alone because God is big enough to be with us always, everywhere, and forever.

Our God is too small when we define God by our standards instead of letting the Living Word of God make us into something new. Thankfully, God transcends our definitions and smallness. God acts in the world beyond what we can possibly imagine so that the world continues to be transformed and created into what God proclaimed on a mountain.

Our God is not too small. Sometimes we just forget how big God can be. So we come to a mountaintop. We sing the song of creation. And we remember that God is with us. Still. Always. Amen.