

Trinity United Methodist Church  
"Thoughts For Troubled Times"  
Trinity Sunday (First Sunday after Pentecost)

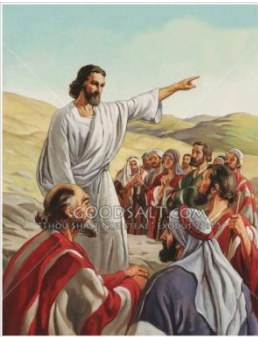
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**The Pastor's Thoughts**

Matthew 28:16-20

<sup>16</sup>"Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. <sup>17</sup>When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. <sup>18</sup>Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. <sup>19</sup>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, <sup>20</sup>and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."



It's the first Sunday after Pentecost, which is often called the birthday of the church, when the Holy Spirit descended on the disciples to empower them to begin the mission entrusted to them to take the gospel to the world. It's the Sunday when the disciples, according to scripture, went out into Galilee to preach, with some hesitation admittedly, but going forth anyway. It's a week that has seen protests, driveby shootings and strikes. It's a week when the death of Palestinians as a result of Israeli airstrikes has resulted in chaos, the imposition in some places of order by military force, and a deepening divide that has our nation poised on the edge of destruction. A week when, as a person of faith, you have to just stand and shake your head. I find the death of innocent civilians horrifying but having said that, I cannot see how looting and burning, even setting fire to a church or a mosque, let alone the shooting of members of either religion, accomplish anything. In retrospect, sadly, I have been here before. In the late 60's I pastored an integrated church in a majority black, poor, section of North Philadelphia. It was a time when cities across the nation were in flames, rioting was commonplace, and it seemed every passing day highlighted the divisions between black and white, young and old. A few blocks from my church, sections of the city behind Temple University burned. Riot police were on every other corner. I was also at the time interning as a chaplain at Delaware State Mental Hospital just outside Wilmington. As I would drive through the city, it was impossible to miss the military jeeps with machine guns at each intersection. As I said, I've seen this before and know it's costs. It brought to mind something else from that time which I have seen repeated occasionally over the years. Some of you may remember Paul Harvey, a conservative commentator on ABC, perhaps best known for his segments called "The Rest of the Story". This selection was written by Mr. Harvey in 1964, presented again in 1996 and is, I think, frightening in its prescience. I reprint it here:

*"If I were the devil ... If I were the Prince of Darkness, I'd want to engulf the whole world in darkness. And I'd have a third of its real estate, and four-fifths of its population, but I wouldn't be happy until I had seized the ripest apple on the tree — Thee. So I'd set about however necessary to take over the United States. I'd subvert the churches first — I'd begin with a campaign of whispers. With the wisdom of a serpent, I would whisper to you as I whispered to Eve: 'Do as you please. To the young, I would whisper that 'The Bible is a myth.' I would convince them that man created God instead of the other way around. I would confide that what's bad is good, and what's good is 'square.' And the old, I would teach to pray, after me, 'Our Father, which art in*

*Washington... And then I'd get organized. I'd educate authors in how to make lurid literature exciting, so that anything else would appear dull and uninteresting. I'd threaten TV with dirtier movies and vice versa. I'd pedal narcotics to whom I could. I'd sell alcohol to ladies and gentlemen of distinction. I'd tranquilize the rest with pills. If I were the devil I'd soon have families at war with themselves, churches at war with themselves, and nations at war with themselves; until each in its turn was consumed. And with promises of higher ratings I'd have mesmerizing media fanning the flames. If I were the devil I would encourage schools to refine young intellects, but neglect to discipline emotions — just let those run wild, until before you knew it, you'd have to have drug sniffing dogs and metal detectors at every schoolhouse door. Within a decade I'd have prisons overflowing, I'd have judges promoting pornography — soon I could evict God from the courthouse, then from the schoolhouse, and then from the houses of Congress. And in His own churches I would substitute psychology for religion, and deify science. I would lure priests and pastors into misusing boys and girls, and church money. If I were the devil I'd make the symbols of Easter an egg and the symbol of Christmas a bottle. If I were the devil I'd take from those who have, and give to those who want until I had killed the incentive of the ambitious. And what do you bet I could get whole states to promote gambling as the way to get rich? I would caution against extremes and hard work in patriotism, and in moral conduct. I would convince the young that marriage is old-fashioned, that swinging is more fun, that what you see on the TV is the way to be. And thus, I could undress you in public, and I could lure you into bed with diseases for which there is no cure. In other words, if I were the devil I'd just keep right on doing what he's doing."*

**Paul Harvey, good day.**

As those who have been called, by word and deed, to be witnesses to the love of Christ to a world in need, I'd we suggest we reflect on those words, for we too bear responsibility for allowing it to come true. We are called to be servants of God, not of darkness. Let's concentrate on living that way.

**Pastor Mike**