

## All Authority

Trinity Sunday; Series A  
Matthew 28:16-20

### **“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me” – Matthew 28:18**

Today, on this Trinity Sunday in the Church St. Matthew calls us to remember especially the authority of our Triune God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Today is also Fathers’ Day. We remember the vocation of father. Today we remember that fathers have been given authority to exercise in parenting their children. Children are called to honor the authority of their parents. It is our Lord’s Will in the fourth commandment that we honor our father and mother.

Authority can be defined as an “unlimited ability or commodity that is given to you by someone else.” A person can only receive authority. A person cannot take it for himself. A person exercises authority by authorizing others to act, not by keeping it for themselves. So the more a person gives authority away, the greater that person’s authority. Authority grows with the delegation of authority to others (*Pastors and Elders—Caring For the Church and for One Another*, 10-11).

Power, on the other hand, is a limited ability or commodity. A person has power at the expense of someone else. A person must disempower others in order to have it and keep it for himself. Those who lack authority might use power. Often times operating with power receives a negative reaction. Manipulation, conflicts, and power struggles often result (*Pastors and Elders—Caring For the Church and for One Another*, 10). The answer then together as a Church and in our individual vocations as Christians is not to have more power but to exercise proper authority.

Sometimes fathers might attempt to remind their children that they are in charge and have authority by exercising power with the following statement that I am sure you have heard before, “I brought you into this world and I can take you out.” Although, if successful, I am pretty sure that the father would then be violating another commandment of our Lord’s. The reality, though, is that some fathers have done a great job of exercising the authority that they have been given in parenting their children while others, perhaps not so much. We all have different experiences with fathers or with being fathers ourselves. Some of those experiences are good ones while others are not so good. So we ought to keep that in mind and be sensitive to that reality as the Church.

We heard Jesus speak to his eleven disciples on a mountain in Galilee in our Gospel reading this morning. He said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me” (Mt 28:18). He possesses the authority of the Triune God. Jesus has been given that authority by the Heavenly Father to exercise properly in his Ministry on earth. After making that declaration he then gives them the authority to make disciples of all the nations of the world by baptizing and teaching them everything that he has taught them. In our reading we see a transaction taking place. Authority is an unlimited ability or commodity that is given by someone else. The authority of the Triune God, the creator of the heavens and the earth as we learned in our Old Testament lesson, is now being given to the Church. Authority given and authority received.

So what do we know about the authority of the Triune God that Jesus gives to the Church? Throughout his Ministry Jesus exercises the authority of God on behalf of the Church. Jesus has authority to teach. Often the hearers would marvel at Jesus' ability to teach with authority (Mt 7:29; Mk 1:22). In his Sermon on the Mount Jesus taught with great authority about the Will of God, the Ten Commandments (Mt 5:1-2; Mt 7:28-9). At Jesus' Transfiguration the voice of the Father calls down to have his disciples listen to the teaching of Jesus (Mt 17:5).

Jesus also has authority to heal. Throughout his Ministry he heals those who are sick and ill (Mt 4:23-25). He cleanses those who have leprosy (Mt 8:1-4). He heals those who are paralyzed (Mt 9: 1-8). He restores sight to the blind (Mt 9:27-31). He gives speech to the mute who cannot speak (Mt 9:32-34). Jesus uses the authority of the Triune God, the creator of the heavens and the earth to do this kind of healing and much more.

Jesus also has authority over nature. Throughout his Ministry he used his authority to calm a storm and silence the winds and the waves (Mt 8:23-28). Elsewhere we read that Jesus actually walks on the water (Mt 14:22-33). Still at another time during his Ministry Jesus curses a fig tree and at his command it withers and dies (Mt 21:19). Through these events he shows his authority over nature. By showing his authority over nature in this way he does things that the writer Job tells us, only God has the authority to do (Job 9:8).

Finally, we learn that Jesus has authority over his opposition and enemies. He has authority over Satan and the demonic. Jesus demonstrated his authority over Satan when he overcame Satan's temptations in the wilderness (Mt 4:1-11). Throughout his Ministry he healed those who were oppressed by the demonic (Mt 8:28-34).

When we read the life and work of Jesus as it is recorded for us in the four Biblical Gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, it is undeniably clear that this Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of God, truly does possess all authority in heaven and upon earth. He has the authority of the Triune God. He possess this unlimited ability and commodity that is given to him by God, the Father. What is more, we learn that Jesus exercises this authority for good. He uses this authority to teach and help people understand more about the Triune God and his Will for their lives. He uses this authority to heal the sick and ill, and restore to health those who have need. He uses this authority to show his control over all of creation, even the natural things like the trees and the seemingly untamable winds and waves of the sea. He even uses this authority to show his control over his adversary and enemies. All authority on heaven and upon earth has been given to him. He uses it for good and not for evil. He even gives it away. He gives it to the Church.

So how does the Church use the authority of God? Although their certainly are instances of the Church misusing and abusing its authority, the Church's best and proper use of its authority is to use it on you and me. God has used his authority through the Church to save you when you were baptized and when you grow in your trust and dependence upon your Triune God. The name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, the Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier, has been put on you. The authority of God has been used to teach and instruct you as a disciple, to learn the ways of your God and to grow in his knowledge and truth. You even have his authority to speak for his name and his Will as his holy child. The Church has used the authority of the heavens and the earth to open the new heavens and the earth to you.

In this way, even as you are under the authority of an earthly Father and perhaps even an earthly Father yourself, you are also under the authority of your Heavenly Father. But take heart, your Heavenly Father always uses his authority for your good, not for your harm. You are his baptized child. He loves you. He forgives you. He strengthens you and empowers you to exercise authority in your vocations in good and loving ways for others. Blessed heavenly and earthly Fathers' Day to all of you! In the name and authority of God, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen!