

On the Edge of Adventure

Genesis 12:1–7 • Matthew 28:16–20

Matt. 28:16 Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. **17** When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. **18** And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. **19** 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, **20** and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

When I was in college, I had the chance to work at a wilderness, summer camp in New Hampshire. Together with another young man, I was to be in charge of twelve, ten-year-old boys...and we had a ball. Being a wilderness camp, we had three weeks to get our gang used to backpacking. Our final trip was a three-day hike around the ring of the Ossipee Mountains, a pretty ambitious goal. The first night we were sitting around the campfire after a horrible dinner prepared by the campers themselves. We were talking about what we would do the next day. One of our intrepid bunch suggested that we should "bushwhack" from our current location to Blueberry Hill, camp out there and have fresh-picked, blueberry pancakes for dinner the next night. What they called "bushwhacking" is hiking without a trail, usually using a compass and a topographical map. My partner and I looked at each other over the campfire. He shrugged. I shrugged. So the next morning we packed up, got our bearings on Blueberry Hill, and, with our compasses and maps, we were off into the wilderness! How hard could it be? On this Annual Meeting Sunday, we, as a fellowship and as individuals, stand on the edge of a great adventure, excited and perhaps a little nervous about the upcoming spiritual journey deeper into relationship with Jesus. What will the journey be like? Will we be up to it? Are we there yet? We can look for guidance and inspiration to our passages this morning.

First, Jesus shares a vision of where we are to meet Him. When the women meet Jesus, He tells them that they will see Him again in Galilee, and he tells them to make sure they tell everyone about it. For some years now, God has been leading you all to a deeper understanding of what it means to be church. You have lived into the truth that the church is more than a building—it is God's people called to know and share the love of God. Over the last year, that vision has gotten clearer and clearer. In some ways, we are like these brave, kind women going to Jesus' tomb, only to find that Jesus has risen, and that God has a vision for we will meet Jesus. Part of that vision, you all have accomplished—and now we are looking forward to the next turning point, the next mountaintop experience, when God shares His vision with us for what is to come next. In talking with Council, we are looking towards the fall, and the conversations, study, and praying that will help our fellowship discern the next steps God wants us to take. Like the women, we will remind each other of where we are going to meet Jesus together next.

Second, Jesus says, "Go." When I was a kid, my brother and I sometimes had way too much energy. We were getting into things and causing a ruckus, and my mom would say, "Go outside and find something to do." The first time she told us that, I argued with her. I could be quieter,

really I could...and she said, "Go!" And you know, my brother and I and our friends had all sorts of adventures—building tree houses, playing basketball, inventing games—but all the adventures all began with the word, "Go!" We are a little like Abraham and Sarah. God is promising us a better future, but we cannot stay as we are and be faithful. We must go. We are a little like the disciples, who have spent three years of their lives with Jesus, and now Jesus says, "Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them...and teaching them all I have commanded." God is giving us a mission—to show people how Jesus loved and to help them love like that—but that mission lies out there. We cannot stay as we are. Jesus says, "Go!"

Finally, with the adventure comes a promise. In the 1990s, when Apple fell on tough times, Apple's chairman, Steve Jobs, traveled from the Silicon Valley to New York City. He wanted to convince Pepsico's CEO, John Sculley, to move out west and run his struggling company. As the two men stood in Sculley's penthouse office, looking out over the Manhattan skyline, the Pepsi executive started to decline Steve Jobs' offer. "Financially," Sculley said, "you'd have to give me a million-dollar salary, a million-dollar bonus, and a million-dollar severance." Flabbergasted, Jobs gulped and agreed—if Sculley would move to California. But Sculley would commit only to consulting from New York. At that, Jobs issued a challenge to Sculley: "Do you want to spend the rest of your life selling sugared water, or do you want to change the world?" In his autobiography, *Odyssey*, Sculley admits Jobs' challenge "knocked the wind out of me." He said he'd become so caught up with his future at Pepsi, his pension, and whether his family could adapt to life in California that an opportunity to "change the world" nearly passed him by. Instead, he went to Apple. Sculley had a purpose, but no promised outcome. But when we go with God, we go with a promise. Like Abraham and Sara, when we go, we receive the promise that through us all nations will be blessed. Like Jesus' disciples, when we go, we have the promise that Jesus will be with us wherever we go, even to the ends of the world, the end of the age. When we go with God, we go with these promises that will change the world.

The adventure can definitely be a place of testing, as my campers and I discovered that day we decided to bushwhack our way to Blueberry Hill. Once we left that first mountaintop, there were lots of times down in the valley when we couldn't see our way, got off track, and weren't sure we could make it. By then, we were committed. Only the way forward. And yes, the blueberries were very sweet when we got there! As we stand on this mountaintop together, we should celebrate! Jesus said, "I'll meet you there!" And here we are right on time...and here is Jesus with us! We have a sense of Jesus saying to us, "Go! Love people like I do. Show grace to those who least expect it. Be a light in uncertain times. Weave the love of God into your community." Of course, the adventure for each of us is learning to trust Jesus more, to look for His Presence, to count on His guidance, and to trust in His providence. We can't see every step on the way, and we will certainly face challenges. But we have each other and we have a promise from Jesus, "I will be with you wherever you go." God says, "Go!" So here we go! And God is with us always!