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Make Disciples

At the end of Matthew's gospel Jesus tells the disciples to "make disciples". That mission, which begins and ends in Jesus himself, has been the task of the Church for 2,000 years and is the theme of this month's issue of *The Adopted Life*. Since Jesus is the adoption of humanity into the life of the Trinity our mission to make disciples points us to several key truths about ourselves, God, and the world:

Mission is a characteristic of the Triune Life of God himself. Since the Father is in the Son, and the Son is in the Father, and the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father through the Son, (John 14:11, 16, 20) we realize that God's nature is a missional "going out to the other" by which the Father, Son, and Spirit eternally and permanently relate to one another by "missionally" entering each others' existence.

This missional nature of the Trinity's Life finds its ultimate expression in the Son's missional "going out to the other" to enter into humanity as the man Jesus Christ. The Son's mission is a permanent act by which he takes up residence in our existence (John 1:14). As the Savior of the World he lives with the world forever. Unlike some of our mission work, which may last a week, a year, or a few years, God the Son is a missionary in permanent residence who will always be in mission towards us on the Father's behalf.

It is noteworthy that Jesus does not tell his disciples to "save the world." Jesus, the great missionary of the Triune Life, has already accomplished that mission. By taking up residence in our humanity, by putting our sinful nature to death in his cross, and by ascending in the glory of the resurrection to the Father's right hand, the Son of God has accomplished his mission to adopt humanity as the Father's children and set right the sin-broken relationship between God the Trinity and the Creation.

Jesus' command to his Church is that we "make disciples." What is a disciple? A human being who knows and believes the truth about himself and his fellow man: that, through Jesus Christ, we are the beloved children of the Father who have been baptized in the Holy Spirit.

This is why Jesus says "baptize them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit." To make a disciple is to baptize, immerse, and soak another person (your wife, your husband, your child, your friend, your neighbor) in the awesome, truth of how Jesus has included that person in the loving life of the Trinity. To make disciples is to immerse our fellow human beings in the love and acceptance that flows through our lives from the Father, through Jesus, in the power of the Father's Spirit.

~ Jonathan Stepp