

## **God's Got Your Back: *Matthew 28:16-20***

Norwalk Christian Church, August 16, 2018, Back to School Sunday, Proper 15, diverted from Lectionary

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It's always a mixture of sadness, fear, and joy, that first day of school. Sadness for the end of summer. Fear of the unknown, yet joy for the exciting new things ahead.

Parents, we feel it to. We are soooooo ready for the kids to be back in school, right? The first day, we're early--15 minutes early. We can't get them to school quickly enough. But then that moment comes when we drop them off, and there's this tinge of sadness. And a little fear, too. We're giving our kids over to these strangers. Will they be okay?

But thanks to the joy, we get over the sadness and fear pretty quickly, and we are ready to get them out the door and back into the school routine.

It's hard, sending your kids off every year. You can see this in the school drop off lanes. It seems the younger the child is, the longer it takes for them to get out the car door in the mornings. In the Kindergarten lane, Mom or Dad has to make sure their little one gets a good, long hug. We tell them bye, how much we love them. Maybe one more hug. A few tears.

At Oviatt, they don't want us to walk our kids to the door, otherwise we'd walk those Kindergarteners right to their classroom, and sit right beside them for at least the first week.

But it gets easier as the kids age. The Middle School drop off lane barely slows down. We usually just roll up the curb and have the kids roll on out.

Yet even though we don't admit it, we always feel it. Kindergarten, Middle School, High School--even dropping your kids off to college. Letting those you love go to face the world without you holding their hands--it's not easy.

But we have to do it. It's part of life. Part of growing up—for kids and for adults. But no matter what--no matter where our kids go. No matter what they do or get into. We are still with them. They are still ours, and we will have their back.

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Our text today is actually a farewell address, Jesus' last words to his disciples. Jesus has been with them for three years or so. He's taught them a lot. Now it's time for them to leave home, as it were, to into a new school, where he will not get to continue everything.

There are some unknowns. Will they be alright? Will they remember what they've been taught? Will the world swallow them up, or will they stay true to who they are and their mission.

But Jesus isn't just throwing them to the wolves. He is not abandoning them. Go into all the world, he tells them. Do your mission. Live out your calling. But remember this: I am with you always, to the end of the age.

Jesus is talking to his disciples, but the Gospel writer ends the gospel this way as a reminder to all of Jesus' disciples, us included, that this promise is for us. Jesus is looking at the eleven disciples, but he's also looking at us.

Remember--all the way down in Norwalk in 2018--remember--I am with you always, to the end of the age.

I don't know if you've checked the calendars lately or not, but we still haven't reached the end of the age. Some days it seems like it's coming quicker than not, but we're still in the thick of it.

That means the promise is true: God is still with us.

Right here--as we step out into the unknown, whatever new beginning we face--an invited one or an uninvited one. One that begins in joy, or one we face because of deep, deep loss or pain--no matter what, remember, God is with us. God's got our backs.

And the promise isn't that no harm will ever come our way. God isn't saying everything will always go as planned and the journey will never have ups and downs. It may all go as planned or it may all fall apart--but that doesn't change the promise.

Remember, I am with you ALWAYS. Always. No matter what. No matter what you go through. ALWAYS.

EVEN, Jesus says, to the end of the age. EVEN, Jesus says, when it feels like the whole world is coming to an end and everything is falling apart--even then, when it doesn't feel like it's true, it's even more true. I am with you always.

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So, on this Sunday of new beginnings, whether it's a new school year or a new challenge. Whether life is taking an unexpected turn, a new opportunity, a new illness, a new problem, a new adventure--or maybe you're stuck waiting for something new, longing for something new, that always seems out of reach.

Wherever you are on the journey, hear God's promise. God will never leave you. God will never forsake you. God journeys with you and will never leave you alone.

God is with you always, even to the end of the age.

Say it after me: **God's got my back. Amen.**