



**A Sermon preached in Christ Church, Grosse Pointe, Michigan
by Ava Carr & Zora Edwards, *Graduating Seniors***

**The 1st Sunday after Pentecost: Trinity Sunday (Year A)
4 June 2023**

For those who don't know me, my name is Ava Carr and I'm a Head Chorister and a graduating senior. My family and I have been members of Christ Church for a long time, and I'm honored to be standing before you this morning. In today's gospel passage, which is only five sentences long, one full sentence is spent describing doubt. This doubt is not surprising. Up until this point, the disciples have been guided by the son of God, by a physical manifestation of their faith. It is easy to believe in someone when they're eating, sleeping, preaching, and living alongside you, but now the circumstances have changed. Jesus is no longer living among them, and where before there was stability, now there is uncertainty. This is a pivotal moment for the disciples, and it mirrors a moment many people face on their journeys of faith. So, I ask, in a moment where you cannot see God, what comes next?

This feeling of doubt can come in many forms, slowly encroaching upon your life, or sneaking up quickly. When Zora and I discussed a sermon, we agreed that for us this doubt takes the form of loneliness. I feel furthest from God when I feel overwhelmed, misunderstood, isolated or unheard. It is easy to think of this distance as a betrayal of faith or as a crack in commitment. But while the reading opens with doubt, it closes with a promise. "Surely, I'm with you always to the very end of the age." Jesus' words are a reminder that doubt and faith are forever intertwined. Even when we do not believe it is there, they are a reminder that we do not walk any path alone. If faith was an easy thing to hold onto, it would not be as powerful. Faith derives its meaning and its substance from doubt, from walking your own path in the night and learning to trust that God is beside you even when blinded by the dark.

What happens after the darkness, though? When doubt is banished and faith is restored, where do you go next? Luckily for us, Jesus leaves some very specific instructions. After his crucifixion, the leadership position he occupied is vacant. His death in many ways triggers a transition in power. In this moment, Jesus instructs his disciples to go out into the world and teach the people everything he has taught them. It is the ultimate act of trust. He has led them as far as he could and is now asking that they continue His journey forward. He has given them his beliefs and his ideas, and now invites them to make those ideas their own. In his most crucial act of leadership, Jesus actually relinquishes power, confident that what he has built will grow and be nourished by those he leaves behind.



His actions are a template for how each of us should approach leadership, and his words are a reminder to nurture and carefully examine our own relationships with God. Just as Jesus is a part of our journey, we should remember that we are a part of his. As I prepare to graduate, I have said bittersweet goodbyes to many things. My cross-country team, my track team, my teachers, my choir. Like the disciples, one chapter of my life is ending, and it is time to embark on a new journey, but it is not a journey I will have to make alone.

+ + +

For those of you who do not know who I am, my name is Zora Edwards. My family and I are relatively new to Christ Church as we moved here to Grosse Pointe from Seattle, Washington three years ago. Christ Church has welcomed me and my family with open arms, and I'm honored and blessed to be here today speaking in front of you all. From today's reading, Matthew 28:16-20, Jesus reminds the disciples, "I'm with you always to the end of the age." A couple of moments ago, Ava asked, "In a moment where you cannot see God, what comes next?"

As someone who's moved around quite a bit in almost 18 years, I never felt alone. My family has been with me guiding me every step of the way. Now that I'm about to begin this next chapter of my life, I thought I'd be doing so alone. I was wrong. As I prepare for my next move, 600 miles away from my family, I will never be alone. Jesus will be with me, guiding me, every step of the way. I spent my final year in high school feeling overwhelmed, left out, and alone. Going into my senior year, I was told it was the best and most memorable year of high school. Now that I am graduating, I can confirm it is the most memorable year, but not the best.

Senior year is the most challenging, overwhelming, rewarding, and memorable year. After years of preparing for college applications, months of writing, and then more months of waiting, I received more rejections and acceptances. The feeling of rejection, especially after I put in so much work and effort, was disappointing. It felt as if all my classmates knew what their future looked like and where they would spend it, but me. I started doubting myself, my years of preparation, and months of writing, and I hate to admit, I began to doubt God's plan for me.

Weeks had passed since my last rejection, and it was now the last day for decision letters to be sent out. Four emails found their way to the top of my inbox, waiting for me to discover what my future holds. I opened the first three emails and carefully read them as each school regretted to inform me, I would not be a part of their class of 2027. As I started to open my final decision, I said a quick prayer. I remember asking for a sign, for guidance and to not feel alone. I then gathered the courage to open the email containing my last sliver of hope, my future, and an acceptance letter.



My prayers were finally answered. I got my sign. I realized I was constantly being guided, and I didn't feel alone. As I'm moving on to my next milestone, I shall always be reminded that Jesus is with me always to the end of the age. My message to you all is to trust God's plan. Easier said than done, right? He puts us through these tests so we can learn and grow from them. My college decision process was challenging, but I grew as a student and a person and learned to accept and move on from rejection.

His lessons aren't always clear or easy to understand, but he has a greater plan for each and every one of us. Trust that plan and trust him as he will be by our side through it all to the end of the age. Amen.