

Isaiah 6:1-8

John 3:1-17

Romans 8:12-17

“The voice of the Lord is powerful,
a voice of splendor, and
bursts forth in lightning flashes.” AMEN!

It is a voice that makes trees twist and
a voice that strips forests bare.

While all in the temple are crying, “Glory.”

It is a majestic account explaining
a heavenly moment
in the psalm today.

Then there’s the calling of the Prophet Isaiah
in a vision that transports him into
the holy space of fiery snakes,
seraphim and cleansing moments
with burning coals and
a voice heard from God,

“Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?”

Amidst the fear, majesty of God, and
humble attributes of the prophet,
the answer, “Here I am; send me!” (Pause)

“This is the day that the Lord has made.
Let us rejoice and be glad in it!”

Which, when translated means, let us
not take the time today to hear sermons
that turn cartwheels trying to explain
the Holy Trinity! :-)

No, today let's hear a short list of
instructions that kid's have
come up with for life.

“Don't walk around puddles when
you can jump in them and make a splash
and a big mess.”

“Have a secret hideout.
Everyone needs a place to escape
when the world gets too crazy.”

“Never ask your parents for anything
that costs more than \$5 when
they are paying taxes.”

“Never tell your mom the diet's not working.”

“Pretend to be a superhero. Capes are optional.”

“Take naps whenever you can because
being tired is just not any fun.”

“True love is when you can go number 2
without locking the door.”

“Don’t pick on your sister when
she’s holding a baseball bat.” :-)

There’s some good advice and good
instructions on life here, don’t you think?

We all need to hear these things because
there is so much about life we don’t understand.

Like why is it that we tend to do
(like Paul mentions) the things
we shouldn’t do?

Why do good people suffer?

Why do bad people seem to prosper?

Why do some children die at very young ages?

Why don’t decisions get made faster?
Why can’t people slow down?

We all have questions about life and
we try to answer them, but the fact of
the matter is, some questions are
too big to answer.

Too complex, and more we try
the more other questions arise.

That's kinda the way I feel about the Holy Trinity.

God's just too big to try to wrap our minds around,
but we still try because like Nicodemus
we want to know about heavenly things.

We want to grasp this God who loves and
desires relationship with creation.

Like Isaiah, we want to have visions that
give us encounters with God and
fiery snake angels carrying hot coals
that purify us and call us to
be witnesses...

well, maybe not that one so much, right? :-)

Yet, we need to hear those accounts, too.

They reflect the enormity and unknowable
aspects of this God whom we seek to understand.

You know, the Trinitarian Doctrine was written out
not so people can conclude:
"We figure God out!"

The doctrine was not a be all end all way
to totally define God.

It was an attempt to capture the enormity of God.

Like, here are three ways to see God,
experience God, but they're incomplete
so keep talking.

Keep being drawn back to scripture and
deep conversations to discover what's new
there when you look through
this trinitarian lens.

Play with the ways that God shows up and
dance with the ways we experience that God.

Nicodemus saw something in Jesus that led
him to seek a meeting even when
it was dangerous for him to do it.

Nicodemus saw something but
didn't know everything.

The text said he went out at night, but I don't
think that is only talking about the particular
time of his visit.

It's making us aware of Nicodemus' condition.

In other places in John, where
darkness or night is mentioned;

like when Judas left the last supper to go and
do what he did, the writer adds,
“and it was night.”

Night is not a good time, in John.

On that first Easter morning, when
Mary Magdelene went to the tomb,
John makes certain we know,
“It was still dark.”

Why? Why is this language so important to the author?

It's not just to mark the time of day but
to reveal to us the condition of those who
want to believe, yet for one reason or
another cannot.

Judas wanted Jesus to be the one
he thought he was
supposed to be.

He wasn't the only one, either.

People still want Jesus to be whom
they want him to be.

John would describe them to be in the dark, too.

Mary Magdalene discovered an empty tomb on
her walk “while it was still dark,”
and immediately thought the body was
removed or stolen.

She encountered two angels, but didn’t fall
down in fear, but began to weep and upon
turning around saw Jesus standing in
front of her, but she didn’t recognize him.

Surely the sun had come up by then,
yet she was still “in the dark.” (Pause)

As a called and ordained pastor
I have encouraged people to trust,
believe, and have faith.

But today, reminds us that it
is not as simple as that.

We need to know that we don’t know everything.

In many ways it is still night and
we walk in the dark.

We still struggle to believe, but the heart of the gospel is this.

We aren't saved by what we know.

There, won't be a test with St. Peter for you and me to define the three tenants of mystery of the trinity.

We simply won't know or understand everything there is about God.

The Godhead is unknowable, majestic, AND relational while still being

knowable, terrifying, AND holy.

I think that's why Jesus spoke to Nicodemus about the way wind blows and we hear it but don't know from where it came or to where it will go.

With God we are always left with more questions than answers, but we do know something that is essential.

It is that action that Jesus took, allowed to happen, and spoke openly about,

even when it's clear he prayed for it
to be taken from him, but went and died and
then rose again for you and for me and
for the rest of the world. (Pause)

Pastor Glenn Ludwig told a story about
a little girl who discovered a great secret
from her grandparents.

Ever since she could remember, her grandparents
had played this little secret game.

They would leave the word "Shmily" (S-H-M-I-L-Y)
around the house for one another.

Grandfather would stuff little notes into
Grandmother's stocking drawer with
the word "Shmily" on it.

Grandmother would trace the word "Shmily" in
the steam on the mirror in the bathroom when
he took his morning shower.

Over the years, they'd compete with one another
to see who could leave the most
creative "Shmily" note for the other.

And when grandma lost her 10 year battle with cancer,
her casket was wreathed with a huge

bouquet of flowers and on the yellow
ribbon around the bouquet was
the one word, “Shmily.”

The thing that held them together.

The thing that nourished them in life and
sustained them in death was “Shmily.

What does it mean? S-H-M-I-L-Y:
See how much I love you.”

And that is all we need to know in our question
filled world.

It is the caption that is not written
but we see it when gazing upon the cross.

“See how much I love you.” (Pause)

Pastors were once expected to have all
the answers and (like Mary Poppins)
“Practically perfect in every way,”

but the truth is we struggle with finding
the answers to life’s toughest questions, too.

Many hours my screen cursor has flashes
as I wonder what to preach to make sense of

an often senseless world.

It is in these times that I look not on the big things,
but on the small, but beautiful things and
know that when we come face to face
with our own humanity,
there is one thing that always
remains true.

At the foot of the cross you may
see how much God loves you.

If nothing else, then remember
this answer to living:

See How Much God Loves You!

God signs it with an exclamation point.

AMEN!