

Holy Trinity

Acts 2:14a, 22 – 36; John 8:48 – 59

The Triune God

The text for today’s sermon is the Gospel reading appointed for this Sunday, Holy Trinity Sunday. Grace, Mercy, and Peace to you from God, our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

**Holy, holy, holy! Lord God Almighty! Early in the morning our song shall rise to Thee; Holy, holy, holy, merciful and mighty! God in three persons, blessèd Trinity!**

There are few, if any, things that are as difficult to share with others regarding our faith than the nature of God. Three persons, co-equal. One God, indivisible. Neither confusing the persons nor dividing the substance. Some religions and some religious sects believe that we worship three Gods. This could not be further from the truth.

Some Christians state “since you recite the creeds, you believe in three gods.” Again, far from true. Many, if not all, of these people have not heard of the Athanasian Creed, much less read that Creed. If they take the time to read the creed, two things may happen: 1) they may complain of a headache because they got confused partway through the creed; and/or 2) they may ask for more information. Either of these conditions allows us to share our faith with them.

Simon Peter, while Jesus was still walking the earth, would make a great statement of faith; and then be corrected by Jesus (or by God). This happened with Peter’s great confession: **“You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.”** Shortly after that Jesus said to Peter: **“Get behind Me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to Me. For you do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of men.”**

This happened again at the Transfiguration of Jesus. It happened again when Jesus said he would be handed over to the Jews and the disciples would leave him. Please know that I am not piling onto Peter. I am not trying to beat Peter up with these statements. I am speaking to the nature of Peter (and many, if not all, of us). Our human nature is to say something, and then have to backtrack that statement.

Last week we heard about the Holy Spirit coming to rest on all the believers. There was speaking in foreign languages. There were converts; Jews who believed and became Christians. This week, we celebrate Trinity Sunday. **We worship** **one God in Trinity and Trinity in Unity, neither confusing the persons nor dividing the substance.**

Make no doubt about it, we worship God.

Where is there proof of the Trinity in the Bible? Even early on in the Bible, during the creation account, we have evidence of the Holy Spirit. **the Lord God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature.** This is the Holy Spirit, bringing life to man. And again, when Ezekiel was in the valley of dry bones: **“Prophesy to the breath; prophesy, son of man, and say to the breath, Thus says the Lord God: Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe on these slain, that they may live.”**

Jesus is believed to be the physical person of God in the Old Testament. When **they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden.** This was Jesus. When **a man wrestled with him (Jacob) until the breaking of the day.** This was Jesus. When Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah (you know them as Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego) were thrown into the fiery furnace, there was a fourth man found to be with them. This, also, was Jesus.

Jesus is then revealed by name in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. When we get to experience God in three persons is at Jesus’ baptism. **Now when all the people were baptized, and when Jesus also had been baptized and was praying, the heavens were opened, and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form, like a dove; and a voice came from heaven, “You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased.”**

Even Jesus, with the Great Commission, stated **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,**

In our Gospel text: **48The Jews answered [Jesus], “Are we not right in saying that you are a Samaritan and have a demon?” 49Jesus answered, “I do not have a demon, but I honor my Father, and you dishonor me. 50Yet I do not seek my own glory; there is One who seeks it, and he is the judge. 51Truly, truly, I say to you, if anyone keeps my word, he will never see death.”**

Jesus is speaking plainly, and yet the Jews of His time do not understand. They know He was born in Bethlehem. They also know that he grew up in Nazareth, in Galilee. They still accuse him of being a Samaritan (to the Jews: at best a half–breed). **52The Jews said to him, “Now we know that you have a demon! Abraham died, as did the prophets, yet you say, ‘If anyone keeps my word, he will never taste death.’**

The Jews are always pressing this issue with Jesus. Where is the salvation of the Jews salvation to be found? According to the Jews, their blood is what saves them. Their proof? It saved Abraham. It saved the prophets. It will save “us”. Yet it was not their blood that saved Abraham and the prophets. It is Jesus’ blood that saved them. It is Jesus’ blood that saves us.

**53Are you greater than our father Abraham, who died? And the prophets died!** They seem to be obsessed with dead people. Their thoughts seem to be “Abraham died in faith; we shall be the same.” The only problem is this: Abraham died, believing in the Christ who is to come. They will die, eventually, denying the Christ that stood in their midst.

**Who do you make yourself out to be?” 54Jesus answered, “If I glorify myself, my glory is nothing. It is my Father who glorifies me, of whom you say, ‘He is our God.’ 55But you have not known him.** Again, they do not know God as Abraham knew God. Their god cares more about bloodline than faith.

**I know him. If I were to say that I do not know him, I would be a liar like you, but I do know him and I keep his word. 56Your father Abraham rejoiced that he would see my day. He saw it and was glad.” 57So the Jews said to him, “You are not yet fifty years old, and have you seen Abraham?” 58Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am (ἐγὼ εἰμί).” ἐγὼ εἰμί I AM.** This is the name of God in the Old Testament. The name given to Moses for the Israelites.

Jesus is using God’s name as a testimony to (or of) himself. This greatly angered the Jews. It stirred them up so much that they: **59So they picked up stones to throw at him, but Jesus hid himself and went out of the temple.** This may seem like Jesus using some of his God power to escape death. There are some texts that continue: ***going through the midst of them and passed by them.***

I don’t think Jesus went Poof! He may have covered his face with his head covering. What we do know from this text is this: Jesus did not die at this time. Jesus knew that He must die in Jerusalem, at the hands (or insistence) of the Jews.

So, what makes Trinity Sunday so special? This is the Sunday where we acknowledge the three persons of God in the Athanasian Creed. This is the Sunday where we understand the true nature of God. This is the Sunday where we celebrate all the aspects, or traits, of the Triune God. Sure, most every week of the year, we hear about God the Father, or Jesus, we may even get the Holy Spirit in the mix. This Sunday, we get to know each aspect of the Godhead better.

**The Father is not made nor created nor begotten by anyone.** The Son is neither made nor created, but begotten of the Father alone. **The Holy Spirit is of the Father and of the Son, neither made nor created nor begotten, but proceeding.**

Each of these persons has their majesty and duties. Here is a question for you. Did God die on the cross? There is the Lutheran answer: Yes and No. As we stated in the creed: **So the Father is God, the Son is God, the Holy Spirit is God; and yet there are not three Gods, but one God.**

God the Father did not die for our sins. God the Father sent His Son into the world to be the atoning sacrifice for all mankind. God the Son died on the cross. God the Holy Spirit was sent by the Father and the Son. God the Holy Spirit did not die on the cross.

Due to our sinful nature, we were (and still are) not able to appease God for all that we have done. God knew this even before He created the earth. God knew that Jesus would have to live the life of a human. Jesus must be tempted just as we are tempted. Jesus was able to resist all temptations and He died to sin – ALL SINS, even from the beginning of time. God then raised Jesus from the dead. This broke the power of death. Death has no control over Jesus, and, by extension, over us. Jesus freed us from sin, death, and the devil.

This is why we gather together every Sunday: to give thanks to God for His gift of Salvation. We gather together in order to confess our sins and receive forgiveness for those sins. We gather together to pray. These prayers may be in the form of a personal prayer, or the prayer of the church (also called corporate prayer). These prayers may also be in the form of the hymns that we sing each Sunday. We gather to hear God’s Word. Last, but certainly not least, we gather to receive the Body and Blood of Jesus in Holy Communion.

All of these activities are intended to keep us firm in the faith. They give us the ability to face our challenges in the week to come. And, when it seems that our tank is getting empty, we return the next week in order to be filled again.

**Holy, holy, holy! Lord God Almighty! All Thy works shall praise Thy name in earth and sky and sea. Holy, holy, holy, merciful and mighty! God in three persons, blessèd Trinity!**

Now, may the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.