

The Holy Trinity June 7, 2020

From Pastor Stephen, Zion Lutheran Church, Pembroke, ON

Welcome: A warm welcome to all who join our celebration of the Holy Trinity as we praise God, who meets us as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. We rejoice in this holy mystery, delighting that God is with us in so many ways, bringing life and hope and inspiring faith. May we grow in the wisdom and presence of God, who is among us always.

We sing our Gathering Song ELW 413 **Holy, Holy, Holy**

The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all. **And also with you.**

Let us pray: God of heaven and earth, before the foundation of the universe and the beginning of time you are the triune God. Author of creation, Living Word of Life, and sustaining wisdom and holy presence. We ever rejoice in you, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, for now, and forevermore. **Amen.**

First Reading: Genesis 1: 1 – 5, 14 -18

A reading from Genesis.

In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters. Then God said, “Let there be light”; and there was light. And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.

And God said, “Let there be lights in the dome of the sky to separate the day from the night; and let them be for signs and for seasons and for days and years, and let them be lights in the dome of the sky to give light upon the earth, to rule over the day and over the night, and to separate the light from the darkness. And God saw that it was good.

Word of God, word of life. **Thanks be to God.**

Psalm: Their Message Fills the World

Second Reading: 2 Corinthians 13: 11 – 13

A reading from Second Corinthians.

Paul writes:

Finally, brothers and sisters, farewell. Put things in order, listen to my appeal, agree with one another, live in peace; and the God of love and peace will be with you. Greet one another with a holy kiss. All the saints greet you.

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with all of you.

Word of God, word of life. **Thanks be to God.**

Song to Welcome the Gospel: ELW 735 **Mothering God**

Gospel: Matthew 28: 16 - 20

The holy gospel according to Matthew. **Glory to you, O Lord.**

Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. When they saw him, they worshipped him; but some doubted.

And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 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, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

The gospel of the Lord. **Praise to you, O Christ.**

Homily:

This morning, as we began our celebration of the Holy Trinity, we sang an old hymn that we have sung in the church for many years to honour the Trinity ... Holy, Holy, Holy.

When I was growing up, this was the gathering song that we sang in our little parish Church every Sunday...and I do mean every Sunday...indeed, every time we gathered for worship. It did not matter if it was Easter, Thanksgiving or even Christmas Eve, our Gathering song was always Holy, Holy, Holy. Until I went to Seminary, I actually thought that hymn was part of the liturgy and that everyone, everywhere, also started worship singing that hymn while the candles were lit and the bell was rung.

It turns out, our pastor was a bit eccentric and more than a little obsessed with the Trinity. I suppose if you are going to be obsessed about anything, the Trinity is a fairly good choice. It is at the heart of our faith and our belief as Christians. Even Christians that are not particularly Orthodox in their beliefs still confess the Trinity of God.

Lutherans do need to be careful to remember that we worship the Triune God. We talk a lot about Christ our Lord, and his cross and resurrection and his real and true presence in our midst. We have been sometimes fairly accused of being overly Christocentric. There are other Christians groups that talk a lot about the Holy Spirit...sometimes to the point of being annoying. And there are Christians who only worship God the creator and have abandoned all other aspects of God's life, with an environmental spirituality that goes way past heresy.

We need to remember that we were baptized in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit ... into the entire mystery of God's life and into the life of the Trinity of God.

The Trinity is notoriously difficult to explain, as we talk about God being three in one and one in three. Some attempts to explain the Trinity are better than others, but none are perfect.

Outsiders to the faith could easily dismiss Christians as people who failed math in Kindergarten. The Trinity does not make sense. It is not supposed to make sense...it is a mystery. Luther suggested we accept holy mysteries as they are and not spend time trying to explain them. All our explaining and puzzling will not change the fact that the Trinity simply is what it is.

God's name in Hebrew, Yahweh, roughly means, "I am who I am." Live with it, God tells us, that is just how it is.

Having said all that, I do love some of the ways we have learned to talk about the Trinity over the years and I find them helpful, even if they are limiting:

I love the image of God the Father, creator God, going for a walk in paradise, in Eden, the Garden of God's delight, only to discover that his naughty, willful children have messed everything up. Even so, he continues to love us with an everlasting steadfast love.

I am inspired by the image of the Holy Spirit as the Wisdom of God, striving to guide and lead us, and breathing into us the very breath of God.

And I cherish the image of Christ on the cross, his arms extended to all with the mercy of God, being lifted up so that he might lift us all up by his grace...and image given to us by St. John.

I find these images of the Trinity helpful, but nowhere near complete. The mystery of the Trinity is more to be celebrated than explained or understood. Even our best efforts and attempts at explaining the Trinity will fall short on at least some aspect of God's life. For those of us who have trouble living with mystery, and for those of us who think God gives us all the answers to all our questions, this state of unknowing will be very uncomfortable. That is our problem, not God's, for God is who God is and we know only what we are capable of perceiving.

And so we celebrate a holy mystery today that is at the heart of our faith ...singing old and new songs to our triune God, and proclaiming a holy math equation that the world cannot understand. But it is the life into which we were baptized, in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, and we shall not be bewildered or confused, but joyful and grateful to share in the life and the grace of God, now and in all of eternity. Amen

Hymn ELW 415 **Father Most Holy**

Prayers of the Faithful:

We pray for all who cry out for justice and for victims of hatred, racism and abuse of power and authority. Comfort all who mourn for loved ones senselessly murdered because of hatred. Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

We pray for all who work for a more compassionate and caring world. Frustrate the work of all who endeavour to control others with their power or authority. Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

We pray for the Church during this time when we must be apart from each other. Bless all we do as we strive to be faithful, even when what we do seems clumsy and inadequate. Help us remember that we shall see each other again in your presence and that our hearts will once again be filled with joy. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

We pray for our world, troubled by illness, plagued with fear and despair. Grant wisdom and skill to all who work on vaccinations and treatments, and watch over those who are ill and those who care for the sick. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

We pray for our loved ones who we cannot be with us. We pray for all in our parish who are mourning and all who are ill, or troubled in body, mind, or spirit. Grant them healing and peace. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

All these things, and whatever else you see that we need, grant us, gracious God.

Gathering all our prayers into one, we pray the prayer that you have taught us:

Our Father, who art in Heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever.
Amen.

Blessing:

May our Gracious God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, bless us and keep us in the Risen Life of Christ our Lord. **Amen**

Sending Song: ELW 414 Holy God, We Praise Your Name

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**