

The Holy Trinity

“Knowing for sure the Trinity’s determined plan of salvation!”

Acts 2:22-24,36

June 15, 2025

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Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, our text for this Sunday of the Holy Trinity is from Acts 2:22-24,36

**“Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a Man attested by God to you by miracles, wonders, and signs which God did through Him in your midst, as you yourselves also know—<sup>23</sup> Him, being delivered by the determined purpose and foreknowledge of God, you have taken by lawless hands, have crucified, and put to death;<sup>24</sup> whom God raised up, having loosed the pains of death, because it was not possible that He should be held by it... Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.”**

So far the text:

Last Sunday, we heard Peter tell the people what exactly was going on this Pentecost morning, the birth of the New Testament Church. The Holy Spirit has arrived. The Holy Spirit is pouring out His gifts on young and old, male and female, so that they are speaking the marvelous works of God...Father, Son and Holy Spirit... in many different languages!

They’re not drunk. This is all going according to plan...according to God’s determined purpose... that the prophet Joel said would come to pass. It’s happening just as God promised! And so verse 21 right before where today’s epistle begins extends God’s gracious invitation to believe in the Lord.

**“And it shall come to pass that whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.”**

Plain and simple, there is no other way to be saved but to call on the name of the Lord. And who is the Lord that you may call upon Him?

Ah...our forefathers, our church fathers, in the 5<sup>th</sup> century, after the Nicene Creed had been formulated to give a truthful summary of the Christian faith about who God is and what He has done – Father, Son and Holy Spirit, also went into much more detail with the Athanasian Creed that we just confessed.

This Creed, this statement of belief, along with the Apostles Creed, and the Nicene Creed are the three creeds that the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod confesses in the Book of Concord. That is why we confess it today, because our church body along with the Ancient Christian church, begun on Pentecost by the Holy Spirit, has also given us the faith to call upon the name of the Lord.

Again, who is the Lord? The Athanasian Creed states clearly:

*“So the Father is Lord, the Son is Lord, the Holy Spirit is Lord; and yet there are not three Lords, but one Lord.*

*Just as we are compelled by the Christian truth to acknowledge each distinct person as God and Lord, so also are we prohibited by the catholic religion to say that there are three Gods or Lords.”*

We believe in one God, not three...one Lord not three, and yet our God, our Lord is three distinct persons. Each is God and Lord.

For this reason, we always end the Divine Service with the Aaronic trifold blessing of God. The Lord, God the Father bless you and keep you, the Lord, God the Son, make His face shine upon you and be gracious to you, and the Lord, God the Holy Spirit, lift up His countenance upon you and give you peace.

All three individual persons of the Holy Trinity, work together according to God’s determined plan to give you salvation, forgiveness and peace.

And so the Athanasian Creed begins with this invitation:

*“Whoever desires to be saved must, above all, hold the catholic faith.”*

There is but one universal, that is catholic faith, taught by God through His prophets, Joel, David and others in the Old Testament and Peter and the other apostles in the New

Testament. And in order to be saved, one must hold it, trust it, treasure it, believe it and never forsake it.

If one doesn't, then the Athanasian Creed, includes something not included in the Apostles and Nicene Creed. What is it? An anathema... a condemnation. A stern warning of the result of denying the faith.

*“Whoever does not keep it whole and undefiled will without doubt perish eternally.”*

Without a doubt, unbelief results in eternal death. So critical is this to know, that the Athanasian Creed repeats it at the end, with even stronger and more explicit words:

*“And those who have done good will enter into eternal life, and those who have done evil into eternal fire. This is the catholic faith; whoever does not believe it faithfully and firmly cannot be saved.”*

To do good, is of course, to receive the righteousness of Jesus Christ, by faith and live according to it, showing forth good works of faith.

As Hebrews 11:6 tells us:

**“But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.”**

It's impossible for any of us to please God by our own merits. To try to do so without faith in Jesus is an impossible task. We can't come to God. We can't say, “I have decided to follow Jesus.” It is only by the Holy Spirit's calling and the giving of faith that one can say that Jesus is my Lord! And the Holy Spirit brings forth fruits of faith in a believer's heart. That is what you are seeing on this day of Pentecost Peter is telling them – a special fruit of faith given to these believers to start the New Testament church!

To do evil, then, is to deny the universal catholic faith and not believe in the Triune God. For any works of an unbeliever, as good as they might seem to the world, are not good in the eyes of God, evil in His eyes. For they are done without faith.

And that is what Peter brings to light as he continues with his Pentecost sermon – our text. You people – who saw the miracles, wonders and signs which God did through Jesus in your very midst – you thought you were doing good to crucify Him, but that was pure evil on your part.

However, God, according to His determined purpose and foreknowledge, **“has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.”**

...according to His human nature He is resurrected, and exalted to the right hand of God as Lord and Christ.

There is but one Lord. And this Jesus is the Lord God! That is the conclusion of Peter’s sermon in verse 36.

What Peter gives, by the power of the Holy Spirit, between verses 24 and 36 is the Scriptural truth and prophesies of the Old Testament, through David, that attest to this conclusion, that they had denied.

Oh, it’s all there for us to read in Psalm 16 and Psalm 110 which Peter quotes. Plain as day! Though the Jews did not believe it and take comfort and strength in these Psalms. Guess who did? Jesus. For He knew that they were written about Him. These are Jesus’ thoughts and words that David is inspired to write:

**“I foresaw the Lord always before my face,  
For He is at my right hand, that I may not be shaken.  
26 Therefore my heart rejoiced, and my tongue was glad;  
Moreover my flesh also will rest in hope.  
27 For You will not leave my soul in Hades,  
Nor will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption.  
28 You have made known to me the ways of life;  
You will make me full of joy in Your presence.’**

Jesus knew that the Lord, God the Father, would always be at His right hand as the enemies surrounded Him. This gave Jesus joy in His heart and gladness to make known God’s plan of salvation through Him!

Jesus knew that He would have to die. He told His disciples this over and over, but Jesus also told them that He would rise again. Jesus would suffer the torments of Hades on the cross. He would be in hell itself, but He trusted that His Father would not leave Him there. But His spirit would be commended into His Father’s hands at His death.

And also, His body would rest in hope in the grave...hope of the resurrection. The Holy One's body would not see corruption or decay, for Jesus is sinless. And what is sinless does not experience the effects of sin.

And finally, Jesus was made known the ways of life...full joy in His Father's presence!

So what does Peter, inspired by the Holy Spirit say?

**“whom God raised up, having loosed the pains of death, because it was not possible that He should be held by it.”**

Loosed the pains of death! **“O death where is your sting. Where is your victory? Thanks be to God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.” (1 Corinthians 15:55,57)**

Do you know who else received strength through this good news? David. For he says in Psalm 110:

**“The Lord said to my Lord, “Sit at My right hand, Till I make Your enemies Your footstool.”**

David knew that the Lord, God the Father, would say to His Lord, Jesus Christ, “Sit at My right hand.” For by Jesus death and resurrection He conquered all enemies of sin, death and the devil...David's, yours and mine.

Peter's listeners were cut to the heart. We are cut to the heart when we remember our sins. What shall we do? Peter gives the good news in the verses that follow our text: **“Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. 39 For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call.”**

About 3000 were added that day. And through your baptism, you too, for the promise is for you and your children also, have received the remission of your sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit has worked this good in you so that you with all believers of this catholic, universal faith, will enter into eternal life. All praise and glory be to God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.

**And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.” Amen. (Philippians 4:7)**