

The First Sunday of the Month

Trinity Sunday

June 7th, 2020

We may not fully understand the Trinity, but we surely benefit from it.

THE PRAYER OF THE DAY: Almighty God and Father, dwelling in majesty and mystery, filling and renewing all creation by your eternal Spirit, and manifesting your saving grace through our Lord Jesus Christ: in mercy cleanse our hearts and lips that, free from doubt and fear, we may ever worship you, one true immortal God, with your Son and the Holy Spirit.

OLD TESTAMENT: Deuteronomy 4:32-34, 39-40 *We see that there is only one God.*

Ask now about the former days, long before your time, from the day God created man on the earth; ask from one end of the heavens to the other. Has anything so great as this ever happened, or has anything like it ever been heard of? Has any other people heard the voice of God speaking out of fire, as you have, and lived? Has any god ever tried to take for himself one nation out of another nation, by testings, by miraculous signs and wonders, by war, by a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, or by great and awesome deeds, like all the things the LORD your God did for you in Egypt before your very eyes? ... Acknowledge and take to heart this day that the LORD is God in heaven above and on the earth below. There is no other. Keep his decrees and commands, which I am giving you today, so that it may go well with you and your children after you and that you may live long in the land the LORD your God gives you for all time.

EPISTLE READING: 2 Corinthians 13:11-14 *Paul calls upon the Triune God to please his congregation.*

Finally, brothers, good-bye. Aim for perfection, listen to my appeal, be of one mind, live in peace. And the God of love and peace will be with you.

Greet one another with a holy kiss. All the saints send their greetings.

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

VERSE OF THE DAY: *Alleluia. Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory. Alleluia. (Isaiah 6:3b)*

SERMON: Matthew 28:16-20

Who Is This God We Worship?

Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go 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 I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

In Egypt there are archaeologists digging through the ruins of ancient Egypt. Imagine 3000 years from now and archaeologists are digging through the ruins of what was once our country. They are trying to discover as much as they can about us. In their excavations they come upon a common penny. Imagine the information they learn from that penny. They learn we had a knowledge of geometry by the perfect, round shape of the penny. They learn we had a knowledge of metallurgy as we were able to mine raw

materials and refine them into metal. They learn we had a knowledge of engineering and architecture by looking at the picture of the Lincoln memorial. They would learn that we had organizational skills in the form of a government. They would learn we had a calendar and a way to reckon time.

They would also learn that we had a religion as they read the phrase, "In God We Trust." But how much can they learn from that phrase? Who is that god? What is he like? In the Declaration of Independence our forefathers depended on God. They used names like, "God, Creator, Divine Providence." In our Pledge of Allegiance we acknowledge God with the phrase, "... one nation, under God." Good. But what can we learn about that God from a penny or documents like the Declaration of Independence or the Pledge? You and I understand it as the Triune God—Father, Son and the Holy Spirit. But a Muslim would understand it as Allah. The Mormon could accept those words because he understands God as not Triune and Jesus as a good Mormon who became a god. So can the Hindu, Buddhist, Unitarian and Taoist. God means something different to all of the.

Are they all right? No. So, how can we know who God is? The penny doesn't give us enough information. But God tells us in his Bible. From our gospel reading for today we learn who God is, what he is like, and what he has done for us.

I. Who is God?

Who is God? In our text Jesus tells us who God is when he tells us to baptize in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. So I suppose we should change the penny and the pledge to say, "One nation, under Gods," because Jesus tells us there are three.

But that would be wrong. We believe there is only one God, period. We do not believe in hundreds of gods like the ancient Greeks or Mayans. We do not believe in pantheism as many do in Africa where everything like trees and the moon are a god. We do not believe there is one supreme being and many "lesser" gods as some claim today. We are monotheists. That means we believe there is only one God.

Yet we also believe this one God is Father, Son and Holy Spirit. We believe this because Jesus says it. These are not three different names for God like my kids calling me, "Father, dad, and sir." The Father is completely different and separate from the Son who is completely different and separate from the Holy Spirit who is not the Father. They are three, but there is only one God. Confused? Yes, it doesn't make sense. We can't make this work mathematically, or logically. We are monotheists because we believe in one God. We are also at the same time Trinitarians because we believe this one God is three separate persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Trinity means "three one."

We may not understand this, but let's not shrug this off as something that is not important. No one understands light. The smartest minds out there are still arguing if light is composed of particles or waves. We just don't understand it, but that doesn't prevent us from using it. We turn it on to see in the dark. We don't deny that it exists. The same with the Trinity.

But does it matter? Someone may say that all gods are the same. My email address is pastor@stpaularlinton.com. Fine. But if you got only one letter of that address wrong like pastor@stpaularlinton.con, using an "n" instead of an "m" at the end, I will never get your emails. It is close, but wrong. Can we divert even one little bit from whom God is? Can we change him even a little bit? You heard it in our Old Testament reading: "**Acknowledge and take to heart this day that the LORD is God in heaven above and on the earth below. There is no other.**" It does matter.

II. What is God like?

Through the Bible we know who the true God is. We also learn and marvel at him because of what he is like. We have witnessed many technological advances in our lifetime. There are computers in almost every home. We have the internet and cell phones and texts that literally take two seconds to go around the world. We have put a man on the moon and now launched more astronauts to a space station last week. Imagine how far we have come in medicine, atomic energy, LED lights.

But before you start patting yourself on the back, let's remember that we haven't invented anything. We only are discoverers who often by chance found these things. It is God who created them. We are much like a blind man. Let's say you put him into a kitchen. He never met or understands what a microwave is. After many days or weeks or even years feeling around and by trial and error, he slowly discovers a microwave can cook food. He didn't invent anything. He just figured it out over time. Mankind hasn't created or invented anything. It was all there because God created it including the laws of nature and chemistry and DNA.

Jesus said in our text, "**All authority in heaven and earth has been given to me.**" All authority. That means authority over the laws of nature and physics, the orbits of the planets, stars, novae, black holes. As true God with the Father and the Spirit, he created these things and gave them characteristics like gravity and light and heat, that two molecules of hydrogen combined with one molecule of oxygen makes water. So we marvel at God. We stand in awe of him.

This should make us feel humble and fall to our knees in complete submission to this God. We realize that everything, our very being and existence comes from the hand of this awesome God. Our skills, abilities, our minds, how we can put things together, are all possible because of him. We have all of our basic needs and then some because of him. So we should be humble before this awesome God.

But we are not. God blessed scientists with great minds and so many of them deny his existence. We go about as though it is because of our hard work that we have what we have. God gave Adam and Eve one simple, easy command by which they can show God how awesome he is and how much they love him, and that was one command too many. Humans refuse to submit to God. We fight him. We want to change him and make into whatever we want him to be so that he depends on us and that we don't really need him. We are like a scared, wounded stray cat. You want to take it to the vet and make it better. But that cat fights you, claws you and bites you. When God comes to us, we really don't want anything to do with him.

III. Look at what he does for us.

If a wounded cat did that to you, you might just leave him or throw him back into the woods. But our God isn't like that. "**Therefore go 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 I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.**"

Again, we naturally will not go up to this God. So he goes out looking for us. Many of Jesus' disciples were confused. Our text uses the term, "doubted." Jesus is leaving. What is going on here? What should we do? Well, he tells them. Their job is simple, to make disciples. Then he tells them how: baptize and teach them what he says to them. What is common to both Baptism and the Word? God's Word. Baptism without God's Word is only a little water. With God's Word, it gives life. Any word will not do. I can read a moving article in my Civil War magazine, but it will not improve my spiritual life one bit. But Christ's teaching will.

Jesus is telling us that nothing will change in our lives if he doesn't change them for us. He spoke these words right before his ascension which came forty days after he rose from the grave which came a couple days after he died on the cross a holy death as payment for our sins. The sins you and I commit, the sins which demand eternal punishment, are forgiven. This is good. But we still are a wounded cat resisting him. Let's say you won something in our silent auction over Easter. Good. You win. But what if we never told you that you won? It will not help you.

Jesus died for the sins of the world. They are genuinely paid for because holy blood was shed for them. Good. But what good would that do if we don't believe? So Jesus sends disciples out to make disciples with God's Word. See the connection? God's Word, people believe, they become disciples, they are forgiven, saved, have eternal life. No Word, they don't believe, and there is no change.

We have many reasons to praise the Triune God, for his creation, for preserving us, for providing for us, for simply being God. But this is the biggest reason we praise him. He could have walked away and

leave us alone. No one would blame him. He didn't. He took care of our sins, and then he comes to us to make us his disciples who believe and are saved.

There is much more we can say about disciple making. But that will have to wait for future sermons. Right now let's remember who is the true God. Let's praise him for what he does for us and to us. Amen.

THE ATHANASIAN CREED

This creed is named after St. Athanasius, a staunch defender of the Christian faith in the fourth century. It was prepared to assist the Church in combating two errors that undermined Bible teaching. One error denied that God's Son and the Holy Spirit are of one being or Godhead with the Father. The other error denied that Jesus Christ is true God and true man in one person. The Athanasian Creed continues to serve the Christian Church as a standard of the truth. It declares that whoever rejects the doctrine of the Trinity and the doctrine of Christ is without the saving faith.

Whoever wishes to be saved must, above all else, hold to the true Christian faith.

Whoever does not keep this faith pure in all points will certainly perish forever.

Now this is the true Christian faith:

**We worship one God in three persons and three persons in one God,
without mixing the persons or dividing the divine being.**

**For each person—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit—is distinct,
but the deity of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is one,
equal in glory and coeternal in majesty.**

What the Father is, so is the Son, and so is the Holy Spirit.

**The Father is uncreated, the Son uncreated, the Holy Spirit uncreated;
the Father is infinite, the Son infinite, the Holy Spirit infinite;
the Father is eternal, the Son eternal, the Holy Spirit eternal;**

**yet they are not three who are eternal, but there is one who is eternal,
just as they are not three who are uncreated, nor three who are infinite,
but there is one who is uncreated and one who is infinite.**

**In the same way the Father is almighty, the Son is almighty, the Holy Spirit is almighty;
yet they are not three who are almighty, but there is one who is almighty.**

**So the Father is God, the Son is God, the Holy Spirit is God;
yet they are not three Gods, but one God.**

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

**For just as Christian truth compels us to confess each person individually to be God and Lord,
so the true Christian faith forbids us to speak of three Gods or three Lords.**

The Father is neither made nor created nor begotten of anyone.

The Son is neither made nor created, but is begotten of the Father alone.

**The Holy Spirit is neither made nor created nor begotten,
but proceeds from the Father and the Son.**

**So there is one Father, not three Fathers; one Son, not three Sons;
one Holy Spirit, not three Holy Spirits.**

**And within this Trinity none comes before or after; none is greater or inferior,
but all three persons are coequal and coeternal,
so that in every way, as stated before, all three persons are to be worshiped as one God
and one God worshiped as three persons.**

Whoever wishes to be saved must have this conviction of the Trinity.

**It is furthermore necessary for eternal salvation truly to believe
that our Lord Jesus Christ also took on human flesh.**

Now this is the true Christian faith:

**We believe and confess that our Lord Jesus Christ, God's Son,
is both God and man.**

**He is God, eternally begotten from the nature of the Father, and he is man, born in time
from the nature of his mother, fully God, fully man, with rational soul and human flesh,
equal to the Father as to his deity, less than the Father as to his humanity;
and though he is both God and man, Christ is not two persons but one,
one, not by changing the deity into flesh, but by taking the humanity into God;
one, indeed, not by mixture of the natures, but by unity in one person;
for just as the rational soul and flesh are one human being,
so God and man are one Christ.**

He suffered for our salvation, descended into hell, rose the third day from the dead.

**He ascended into heaven, is seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty,
and from there will come to judge the living and the dead.**

**At his coming all people will rise with their own bodies
to answer for their personal deeds.**

**Those who have done good will enter eternal life,
but those who have done evil will go into eternal fire.**

This is the true Christian faith.

Whoever does not faithfully and firmly believe this cannot be saved.