

7. 6-12-22 Trinity Sunday

Sermon- Starting Our Yearly Journey

Scripture- John 3:1-17, CTW- Psalm 8

Hymns- 65, 2, 719

Theme- This is the first Sunday after the Pentecost. Trinity Sunday is technically the beginning of the Church Year. So this sermon is a marker for the beginning of our yearly journey as the church. Last week was Pentecost Sunday where the brave band of followers were all of one accord and all in one place. This Sunday we look at what happens when the believers of God, armed with the reality of the Trinity "now therefore go" out into the world to do ministry.

Trinity Sunday is the first Sunday after Pentecost to honor the Holy Trinity—the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Although the word "trinity" does not appear in Scripture, it is taught in Matthew 28:18-20 and 2 Corinthians 13:14 (and many other biblical passages).

The concept of the trinity can never be completely understood or rationalized, but it is clearly taught in Scripture. Understanding of all scriptural doctrine is by faith which comes through the work of the Holy Spirit.

Therefore, it is appropriate that this mystery is celebrated the first Sunday after Pentecost when the outpouring of the Holy Spirit first occurred.

I. On Trinity Sunday We Think Of God.

A. On Trinity Sunday, the Christian Church ponders with joy and thanksgiving what the Father, Son and Holy Spirit have done to accomplish the salvation of sinful humanity. It is brought to remembrance how Christians should respond to the love God has shown us, praising Him, and giving Him glory.

We remember the Father as our Creator, the Son as our Savior, and the Holy Spirit as our Comforter.

B. Today, Trinity Sunday is to explain, to the best of man's ability, the clues written in Scripture to guide us to a fuller understanding of our triune God. The Father is God from the beginning (John 1:1); Jesus revealed Himself as equal to the Father in John 10:30, "I and the Father are one." Together, they sent the Holy Spirit (John 14:26).

Together they send us out as disciples to "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" (Matthew 28:19).

II. Understand You Are A Child Of God!

John 3:16 is arguably the best-known verse in the Bible. It shows up on signs, cards, posters, billboards, t-shirts, and even at football games. Martin Luther referred to it as "the heart of the Bible, the Gospel in miniature." Its words are a delight for saints and solace for sinners.

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. (John 3:16)

A. But could it be that for all its familiarity we have been blinded to its meaning? Early on when I was just starting to preach as a pastor, I learned what I thought was a clever way to illustrate the meaning of John 3:16.

I would stand to the side of the pulpit, stretch my arms out wide and say, "Jesus' outstretched arms on the cross was God's way of saying that he loves us 'this much' "; giving my arms a little extra stretch for emphasis.

But is that what John 3:16 is really telling us? When we read "God loved the world so much" our focus is immediately put on us. It makes the Father's motivation for sacrificing his Son the

amount of his love for humanity as if he simply could not do without us and would do anything to get us back.

The biggest problem with this idea is that it's not in the Bible. What's more, it completely reverses the truth of the gospel. It wasn't our worth that brought Jesus down; rather his coming down brought us our worth.

This difference is no small thing, especially in our idolatrous culture of self-love. One of the greatest lies is that God needs us. He doesn't. That idea is the heart of all false religions. God doesn't depend on and needs nothing from his creation.

Imagine with me for a moment, the delight you would experience in discovering that you had a long-lost uncle or aunt who had made you the heir to their estate. Can you see it?

You'd wake up one morning and discover that they had left you riches beyond count, that your major financial worries were over, and that you really didn't have to worry all that much about the future.

If that scenario happened, how would you feel? What would you do? Or, more to the point, what would you do differently? And here I don't mean what would you run out and buy – though I suspect that most of us would treat ourselves to something – but I mean something more along the lines of, what would be different about your day-to-day attitudes, practices, habits, and outlook?

B. How would knowing that your future is absolutely secure change your present?

I ask because it's just this scenario that the Apostle Paul is describing in these few verses of his Letter to the Church in Rome. Note the language he uses:

For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received a spirit of adoption. When we cry, "Abba!

Father!" it is that very Spirit bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ (Rom. 8:15-17a).

According to Paul, we are not only God's children, but also heirs, and not just heirs, but co-heirs with Christ. Now, stop here for just a moment and think about what Paul is really saying.

Paul says that God considers us co-heirs – that is, equal inheritors of all God has to give – with Christ, God's only begotten Son.

Not only that, but Paul goes on to describe the difference it makes. Rather than being afraid – of the future, of what people may think of us, of our status, of our standing with God – Paul invites us instead to imagine a life of courage, the courage of those who have been adopted by God and invited into the full measure of God's blessings and riches.

Jesus says much the same to Nicodemus, inviting him to imagine that we have the opportunity through our life in the Spirit to be born anew, born from above as God's children, those so precious God was willing to give his only Son as a testament to how much God loves all of us.

C. God is so full of love that there must be some way of talking about that love shared in and through profound relationships.

This means, I think, that when we talk about the Trinity as God being three-in-one, we really haven't captured the heart of the doctrine and reality unless we recognize that God is three-in-one in order always to add one more – and that's us, all of us, an infinite "plus one" through which God's love is made complete in relationship with all of God's children.

And that's what these passages testify to – the profound love of God that draws us into a relationship with God, with each other, and with the whole of creation and the cosmos.

So I'll ask again: what does it mean for us to live knowing we are God's beloved children, adopted and chosen and named co-heirs with Christ?

Rather, I mean to ask what difference does it make NOW?

What difference does it make to know that you are unconditionally loved? That you have immeasurable value in God's eyes?

That no matter what to do – or is done to you – and no matter where you go, yet God always loves you and cares about you?

III. It Has to Mean Something!

Ben Johnson, a teacher at Columbia Seminary in Richmond, Virginia, tells the story of a young man who came to the door of a monastery with a large duck in his arms.

He asked for his uncle, one of the monks, and said he wanted to give his uncle and the other monks the duck as a gift for all they had done for him.

"Eat it in good health", he said.

A few days later another knock came on the monastery door. "I am a friend of the nephew who brought you the duck. I've been a little down on my luck lately and I was wondering if I could impose on you for a bite to eat and a place to stay."

The monks welcomed him happily and served him some of the leftover duck.

A few days later, there was another knock on the door. "I am a friend of the friend of the nephew who brought you the duck. Could I impose on your hospitality for a day or so?"

He too was welcomed and given a steaming hot bowl of duck soup.

And then, as you can imagine, a knock came and it was a friend of the friend of the friend of the nephew who brought the duck. That night at dinner he was presented with a steaming hot bowl of water.

He was surprised but they explained naturally that this was soup from the soup of the soup of the duck the nephew brought.

Now that is a silly story but it says something profound about the state of faith in our time.

A. Too many people are living with a watered-down Christianity.

Perhaps their mother or father or their grandparents had a profound faith in God, but they have been making do with something that is weak, tasteless, and certainly without nutrition.

Is it any wonder that so many ask: Where is God in my life?

We must read the entire Bible ourselves and pray over each of its pages!

Jesus said **you must be fully vested** in the faith walk... You can't just experience a part of some of the faith.

The entire faith **has to be in you**, you walk the faith, you sleep and eat the faith, and then you teach the faith.

B. Lastly, By being a disciple, a Christian, a follower, you must embrace and engage the full Trinity to do the work of servant to all of humanity. IT SHOULD BE WHO YOU ARE, JUST AS IT IS WHO JESUS IS!

You probably remember the story about the eagle who was raised from a peep with chickens, and so stood in the barnyard, never thinking about flying, but being content instead with his lot in life. Day after day he would spend his time scratching for corn and

occasionally with amazement and envy he would look up to see eagles majestically soaring in the skies.

According to Paul, we're all eagles, and perhaps our task this week is simply to be reminded of that and be ready to go out to soar for Jesus!

After all, THAT IS THE TRUE NATURE OF THE three-in-one God who has invited each and all of us to be God's "plus one" at a heavenly feast that begins this very week.

Let us resolve to go forth with that in our minds and in our hearts!

Amen? Let Us Pray...