

Rev. Timothy M. Crummitt

Holy Trinity - Year B

65th Week of Pandemic - First Indoor Service

Isaiah 6:1-8

Psalm 29

Romans 8:12-17

John 3:1-17

05/30/2021

### **Gospel**

The Holy Gospel according to St. John:

<sup>1</sup>Now there was a Pharisee named Nicodemus, a leader of the Jews. <sup>2</sup>He came to Jesus by night and said to him, “Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God; for no one can do these signs that you do apart from the presence of God.” <sup>3</sup>Jesus answered him, “Very truly, I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above.” <sup>4</sup>Nicodemus said to him, “How can anyone be born after having grown old? Can one enter a second time into the mother’s womb and be born?” <sup>5</sup>Jesus answered, “Very truly, I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit. <sup>6</sup>What is born of the flesh is flesh, and what is born of the Spirit is spirit. <sup>7</sup>Do not be astonished that I said to you, ‘You must be born from above.’ <sup>8</sup>The wind blows where it chooses, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.” <sup>9</sup>Nicodemus said to him, “How can these things be?” <sup>10</sup>Jesus answered him, “Are you a teacher of Israel, and yet you do not understand these things? <sup>11</sup>“Very truly, I tell you, we speak of what we know and testify to what we have seen; yet you do not receive our testimony. <sup>12</sup>If I have told you about earthly things and you

do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you about heavenly things? <sup>13</sup>No one has ascended into heaven except the one who descended from heaven, the Son of Man. <sup>14</sup>And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, <sup>15</sup>that whoever believes in him may have eternal life. <sup>16</sup>“For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life. <sup>17</sup>“Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.”

The Gospel of our Lord

### **Prayer**

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

Amen.

### **The Trinity!**

Good morning! Instead of preaching specifically about the recent mass shooting in San Jose that happened this past week, I thought that I would try to paint a picture of a community where mass shootings aren't weekly events. So, while it won't be mentioned again, this sermon is about a place where the opposite of San Jose happens. While it might not seem obvious, a sermon on Holy Trinity Sunday is exactly the sort of topic that can help us see something better in the midst of the San Jose violence. I get it, the Trinity is definitely something that leads us to scratching our heads come Sunday school time. As I told our class this past Monday, a pastor could spend an entire sermon just explaining how all the common Trinitarian analogies we hear in children's sermons are heresies, but I doubt that would be helpful. Karl Rahner famously said that *“should the doctrine of the Trinity have to be dropped as false, the major part of*

*religious literature could well remain virtually unchanged.*<sup>1</sup> We seem to spend a lot of time talking about what the Trinity ISN'T, but not much time talking about what the Trinity IS. But today, I'm not going to do either of those. Instead, I want you to experience the Trinity.

We begin with a story. I think I met Dave Etling sometime around my freshman year of high school. Every day as school finished up, we would leave and see Dave standing outside the school meeting and talking to students. He worked for a local church, but he seemed to show up at every school event. He got to know the teachers, the coaches, the principal and other leaders of the community. But throughout all of this, Dave got to know the students the most. And what was the craziest thing was that he seemed to genuinely care about us. As you ran into Dave around town he would talk with you and learn more about your life. It wasn't until after a friendship had grown that Dave invited you to the church for something like a hangout session where the church opened its doors for the local students to play pool or play video games on the giant tv they had. As we got to know Dave more and more, and we started to notice that he genuinely cared about us, he slowly invited us into more and more church related things.

At every single step Dave made sure not to make the same mistake that the church ALWAYS seems to make. He didn't invite us because the church was important and needed another person, he invited US because WE were important. It was always about our relationship together, not about getting people into pews. In fact, he frequently got into trouble with leadership at the church where he worked because he didn't push the students to attend Sunday morning worship. For Dave, God wasn't about

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<sup>1</sup> Rahner, Karl. *The Trinity*. New York: Herder and Herder, 1970. pp. 10-11.

attendance, God was about relationship. While this might seem like a wonderful lesson on why inviting strangers to church doesn't work, it's actually about the Trinity. Because our Triune God is about relationship too.

Think about your strongest relationships, maybe with a spouse or partner, or a child. Think about your best friend. Can you really explain why those relationships are important? Or could you really faithfully explain what that relationship was in the first place? The Triune God is the same! Some things defy explanation! I'm not saying there isn't a way to get at understanding the Holy Trinity, but I can say confidently that we'll never fully understand God, just as we can never fully understand why we love the people we love.

In fact, our relationships with one another ARE expressions that take place exactly because of the Triune God! Think of it this way, and I can't take credit for this analogy, my theology professor is the one who told it to us. Imagine the Trinity as three persons dancing. Now the God as three dances around the floor in perfect harmony, and the dance is just so good! That's when God looks around and says "this is just so amazing, people need to experience this dance too!" And so we get invited in! And we join the dance with God, messing up, missing steps, but enjoying it all the same. And in the midst of our joy we look around and realize that we have loved ones who we care about who aren't in the dance either! So we bring them onto the floor too! And little by little the joy that is this mystical dance grows.

What's funny is that the same thing happened with Dave Etling. As participation grew, the ones like myself started to invite and include our other friends. "You have got to come see this! It's so much fun!" And at the

root of this was the foundation that you were important simply because you were a friend, because you were you! Our Trinitarian dance is the same way too! God looks around and says this is just so good, how could you not want your loved ones to participate! And we yell to our friends and family, “You have to come see this!”

Does that explain how the Trinity works? Not at all, but that was never my point. You don't need to understand it, you just need to experience it! What you need to know is that God IS the Trinity. It's not some analogy to explain the complexity of God. No, God is the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. The Trinity is God and God is the Trinity. And as one, God has shown God's love for all the world. Trying time and time again to get people to join in the dance. Not because it's about salvation or how if you don't dance you're damned. No! God wants you to join because God loves you! Yes! You! We don't need to be perfect to dance, sure, some people seem to know the moves better than others, but the ones who REALLY get it are the ones who cut loose and stop thinking about it, and just enjoy the music! And in the midst of this union together something amazing happens. We stop seeing differences and start focusing on being together. We form communities defined not by what we hate, or what we don't believe, but communities that love and show that love for others.

That's what the Triune God is inviting us to become. And that's the type of community that is possible! Don't believe me? Well, let's settle it on the dance floor! Amen.