

Rev. Timothy M. Crummitt
Holy Trinity Sunday - Year C
St. Paul's Lutheran Church
Proverbs 8:1-4, 22-31
Psalm 8
Romans 5:1-5
John 16:12-15
06/12/2022

Gospel

The Holy Gospel according to St. John:

[Jesus said,] ¹²“I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. ¹³When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth; for he will not speak on his own, but will speak whatever he hears, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. ¹⁴He will glorify me, because he will take what is mine and declare it to you. ¹⁵All that the Father has is mine. For this reason I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you.”

The Gospel of our Lord

Prayer

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

Amen.

Holy Trinity!

Good morning! Welcome to everyone's favorite Sunday of the liturgical year! That's right! It's Holy Trinity Sunday! Are you as excited as I am?! No? Well, I understand, this particular day of the church calendar

isn't well loved. When I was little, I would be dismayed every year when I walked into worship, picked up my bulletin, noticed that it was heavier than normal, and flipped through to see that we were going to be saying that very long and annoying Creed. Trinity Sunday is disliked by pastors and parishioners alike. Among clergy, it's often called "Heresy Sunday" because of the many mistakes you usually hear when the Trinity is explained by well-intentioned church leaders trying to do the children's sermon. (I would like to say that if those pastors are so good, they should lead the children's sermon... but I digress...) I have long believed that most preachers dislike the day because they too are unable to articulate an understanding of the Trinity, and so they become afraid, and shy away from giving this Sunday the attention and focus that it deserves.

And because we don't talk about the Trinity, other than using it to signify the ending of a prayer, we only make the problem worse. I use this quote every year on Holy Trinity Sunday, but Karl Rahner, a Catholic Jesuit priest and theologian from the 1950's, 60's and 70's, 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."*¹

So what happens is that we are shown a list of analogies and examples that the pastor has apparently said are heresy, with very little attempt to show us what the Trinity IS. But, to at least say SOMETHING, here is what we CAN say about the Holy Trinity.

First, the Trinity IS God. When I was younger I would hear the Trinity spoken about along with numerous other analogies, and so a lot of people (my younger self included) make the mistake of thinking that the Trinity is just a fancy way for us to talk about how God is ultimately unknowable.

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

“God is so complicated, here’s an equally complicated analogy of God in three persons to help you not understand.” But that’s a mistake. The Trinity isn’t just one (of many) ways to explain an ultimately unknowable God, the Trinity is how God has chosen to make Godself known to the world. God has told us that God exists as the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. This isn’t an example, this is God revealing all of who and what God is to us! Everything we know and have been shown about God comes from this understanding or foundation. So while we might talk about God as creator, or healer, or savior, they all stem from this first principle. When we talk about God, we’re talking about the Trinity! Or to say it another way, the Trinity is God.

Second, the Trinity is ultimately a mystery. As human beings our minds are finite, and so our ability to grasp the magnitude of God is inadequate. Thomas Aquinas, one of the most famous theologians ever to have lived, said about his lifetime of work that *“all that I have written appears to be as so much straw.”* So, we can try all we want, and I think we should, but we’re ultimately fighting a battle we can never win. God is just too big.

So... What are we to do then? Well... I would argue that you should experience it. And I’m not the only one. Listen to what Martin Luther had to say: *“In all this God has revealed more to us than we can ever accomplish. But for the rest — for instance, how the Trinity can be but one God... That you must not try to understand; you must believe it. Leave it to God...”*² So, take heart, even the founder of Lutheranism didn’t understand it.

² Volume 22 Luther, Martin, and Jaroslav Pelikan. *Luther's Works*. Vol. 22. St. Louis Miss: Concordia Pub. House, 1957. pp. 314-315

The Trinity isn't just some intellectual exercise, and it's not a thing that is only the province of ivory tower thinkers with nothing else to do but write about how the other person is wrong, but they're right. No, the Holy Trinity is a relationship. A relationship that exists at the very heart of who God is. Our God has revealed to us that God is the Father, and the Son and the Holy Spirit. That there exists between the three persons a relationship. You have been hearing about that relationship for weeks now! The Gospel readings for about the last month have been about that exact relationship.

From today: *“13When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth; for he will not speak on his own, but will speak whatever he hears, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. 14He will glorify me, because he will take what is mine and declare it to you. 15All that the Father has is mine.”*

From Pentecost last week: *“8Philip said to [Jesus,] ‘Lord, show us the Father, and we will be satisfied.’ 9Jesus said to him, ‘Have I been with you all this time, Philip, and you still do not know me? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, ‘Show us the Father’? 10Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own; but the Father who dwells in me does his works. 11Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me...”³*

And from two weeks ago, the last Sunday of Easter: *“As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. 22The glory that you have given me I have given them, so that they may be one, as we are one, 23I in them and you in*

³ John 14:8-11a NRSV

me, that they may become completely one, so that the world may know that you have sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.”⁴

Did you catch that last bit? And this is the bit I love, it's at the very core of how I understand my faith and my call. God exists as Three-in-One, and through Jesus Christ we are INVITED into that very same relationship! We don't become God, but we get a taste, a chance to experience some of the joy and love that defines the very being of who God is! That's why a community is so important to me! We can't do it alone! Do you have friends or loved ones who say they don't need the church to worship God? Well they're wrong! Even God needs God! The Trinity is often described as a dance, three persons drifting through the steps together seamlessly. And the song is just SO good that we can't help but join in, dancing around the floor, part of something bigger than ourselves for once... But the dance can't stop there. It reaches out! It calls on you to invite others to join! Not because we want more people in the church simply because we think that's success, not because we want a larger donation in the collection plate, not because we want the numbers to be bigger simply for bigger's sake... no, those are the motives of those who either don't dance or who have forgotten the steps. We invite those around us because we love them, because what we're experiencing is simply SO good that we don't want them to miss out on it! That's what the Trinity is... and I pray that we all share in that dance together. Amen.

⁴ John 17:21b-23 NRSV