

Sermon for Trinity Sunday

The text: John 3:1-17

The Festival of the Holy Trinity is based on a doctrine of faith that is drawn from the bible, even though the word Trinity isn't in the bible. Even Christians of the first couple hundred years didn't use the term Trinity to describe God. It was just accepted that God is God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

The doctrine of the Trinity came together at the council of Nicaea in 325AD, emerging from a controversy—and heretical views-- about the nature of Jesus. The heresy was and is still in the world in some religions, that since Jesus was born, he is a created being with divine attributes, yet can't be of the same substance of God, so can't be God. Many have tried to explain the Trinity in earthly ways, through apples, and water, and a clover leaf, but how can our human minds grasp completely a heavenly thing, as our Triune God?

As Nicodemus struggled to understand what Jesus was saying to him, we too, ponder the mysteries of the Triune God. One way in which the mystery of the Trinity has attempted to be explained is through the statement, 'we come to the Father through the Son, by the power of the Holy Spirit'. While that sounds a good statement of our faith, it is still a way of which our human mind is trying to understand heavenly things.

We say in the Apostle's Creed, 'I believe in God the Father almighty maker of heaven and earth'.

If God made the heaven and the earth, which includes all of us, why did he make it so that we could turn away from him? Did he create a faulty product? Because as we know within ourselves, we are subject to not living according to what he created us to be. We are born but born into sin. Flesh gives birth to flesh. Sin separates us from God, it perverts our lives, and the wages of sin is death. This problem is with us every day of our earthly life.

In his letter to the Galatians chapter 5, Paul explains clearly what the desires of the flesh are. Sexual immorality, impurity, lustful pleasures, idolatry, sorcery, hostility, quarrelling, jealousy, outbursts of anger, selfish ambition, dissension, division, envy, drunkenness, wild parties, and other sins like these.

Quite a list isn't it? A scary list because all of us struggle with something in that list and Paul warns, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

Paul also writes in Romans 8 "Brothers and sisters, we have an obligation—but it is not to the flesh, to live according to it. ¹³ For if you live according to the flesh, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live".

Which means there are two ways of living which consequently have two outcomes.

To live according to the flesh ends in death and living by the power of the Spirit which leads to life.

In Jesus' conversation with Nicodemus in John 3, Jesus says, "Very truly I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again."

The word for again in the Greek has a double meaning. It can mean 'again' or 'from above'. Nicodemus presumes Jesus is saying 'born again' so he asks, "How can someone be born when they are old? Surely they cannot enter a second time into their mother's womb to be born!"

Jesus answered, "Very truly I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless they are born of water and the Spirit.

We know water is an everyday, much-needed material which sustains life. But when it is used with God's word it becomes a means of giving new life; being reborn, regenerated, washed clean, the old self drowned in the waters of baptism and raised to new life into the kingdom of God. This grace has come from above and joins us to a heavenly family, born into a new life with God.

It is a life that is lead by the Spirit, whom Jesus sent to be our helper. God the Father did what he promised, he sent Jesus. Now the Holy Spirit does what Jesus promised. The Holy Spirit lives in us through rebirth as God's children through baptism. The Holy Spirit empowers us with the gifts of the Spirit to live a life in the Spirit, guided by the Spirit. A life filled with the Spirit is one of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

The Holy Spirit also convicts us, when we lose focus of a life in the Spirit and begin to satisfy the works of a life of the flesh. The Holy Spirit reminds us whose we are, children of the Triune God who can come to him as children speak to their earthly Father and call him, Abba Father. In other words, it's as though we are saying 'Daddy'.

How can that be possible, when we know that God is a Holy and just God, and we struggle with the desires of the flesh? Like Isaiah, we are aware of our unclean lips and even dare to stand before the Holy God.

Just as the seraph took a fire of coal and touched the lips of Isaiah to purify his mouth, the Holy Spirit makes us aware of our uncleanness and through our confession, we are purified through the forgiveness that Jesus has won for us on the cross.

Why would God do that for us when we don't deserve it?

It all comes down to God's love for the world he created. He wants to restore all people to an everlasting life with him. As in John 3:16-17 *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. ¹⁷ For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.*

God the Father, through Jesus by the power of the Holy Spirit assures us of this saving grace. Because like Isaiah, we have been made clean to be his disciples and we can say 'here I am Lord, send me'.

While we may not understand all the mysteries of faith, it doesn't really matter. For since we are born again, born from above, we have the confidence God is with us and can use us in ways that surprise us. For just as the wind blows where it pleases, God works in ways we cannot predict or fully understand through the power of the Holy Spirit.

What we do know is that God is triune, father, Son, and Holy Spirit. God's mission becomes our mission, in that people are reborn into the kingdom of God. For people to know that God's desire is not to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through him.

So dear Christian family, that's why God the Father sent Jesus. That's why Jesus sent the Holy Spirit. To live in people's hearts and help us live a life in the Spirit of the triune God.

Amen.