

The Holy Trinity
Isaiah 6:1-8 Romans 8:12-17 John 3:1-17
St. John's Lutheran Church, Grove City OH
May 30, 2021 (Traditional)

Whenever we come to Holy Trinity Sunday, I always have trouble getting started with a sermon. *The Holy Trinity*. Where do I start? What tiny little speck of *everything* am I supposed to talk about? And then I realize, this sense of smallness and helplessness is a good place to start. Our readings for today emphasize the vastness, the power, the freedom, the *incalculable* side of God. He overflows any container we try to put him in. He defies our feeble attempts to describe him. Nicodemus in today's gospel is trying to get a grasp on what Jesus is telling him. But he's completely confused as Jesus confirms the absolute freedom of the spirit: "He blows where he wills." In fact Jesus basically says that for a human being to have any kind of substantial connection with God, they have to become new people. They have to be *born from above* as he puts it. That's how different God is from human beings!

But then in the same gospel lesson today, we hear John 3:16. The verse people hold up at the football games, appropriately behind the goal posts: *For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only son, that whoever believes in him will not perish but have eternal life*. Suddenly Nicodemus, and you and I, been brought into the game! Suddenly it sounds like we can be part of God's life. It sounds like we can win.

So the God who created the galaxies, who overflows any container we try to put him in, is also the one who, on a particular day in history—on this tiny speck of a planet you and I live on—became a human being. He became one of us, so that we can know him. So that we can live in a personal relationship with him. And in Jesus, not only does the creator of the universe show himself to us; he also confirms once and for all that you and I are *made in his image*. Surprise! I personally don't blame people who come to the conclusion that life is "solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short." What other conclusion would you come to, if you don't know who God is, or what he made you to be? But because God made himself one of us, we can know that God looks at us like we look at our own sons and daughters. He created us for a close relationship.

And let's go all the way here: not only does he say you and I are his flesh-and-blood family. In Jesus he also completely, once and for all, exposes the big elephant in the room. The dark, ugly reality that no one wants to talk about. The fear, the suffering and pain and meaninglessness and brokenness and death that all of us know—he confirms what we know but never want to hear: we're broken. We're lost. No amount of knowledge and wisdom, no amount of work can get you out of this twisted situation; it's too big for you. Well, not only does Jesus, the incarnate 2nd person of the Holy Trinity, show us who God is and who we were created to be: he reconnects us. He makes it possible for us, even in our brokenness, to live by faith as his children. He is our **Savior**.

Jesus has swallowed the whole disgusting elephant for us. The one who knows no sin became sin for us, he absorbs all the fear, suffering, pain, meaninglessness, brokenness and death, and it all dies with him on the cross, it's all destroyed with him. In our baptism it's personal: all of **my** brokenness—my death—is put to death. And in Christ I am born again...he lifts me up in his resurrection. I live by faith in him now, completely dependent upon him for every breath I take. I now have life in the Holy Spirit.

Think of it: just as Jesus' hands were bound to the cross by nails, in my baptism into Jesus, the Creator of the universe chooses to *bind* himself forever to me—to a speck of dust, to a dying sinner—with promises. It's funny how I immediately see that as God limiting himself, that he *binds* himself to us with promises. But for him it's not a limitation at all. It's who he is. He is love. Remember 1 John 4. *God is love*. Most of us want options all the time. Well, God doesn't look for options when he looks at you and me. He sees his child in danger. So he binds himself to us. He even ties his public reputation to you and me. How crazy is that. *He ties his reputation to what we do and say*. He's willing to risk that!

Not only will he go into the casket with me: every day of my life he will be willing to be spit on, cursed, and nailed to a cross; all for my sake. Yes his power is beyond comprehension. But the staggering truth is this: he will give that power away for just one person in this room. It's personal. Every day, you can know you're not just another part of the collective. He does *not* love you the same as everyone else. You are one of a kind. In God's eyes, you're irreplaceable. Isn't it completely humbling to be loved like that, every day of your life?! And he wants every person on this earth to know that love every day.

It's that divine love that helps me appreciate just how unique and amazing everyone else around me is. If God's promise is true, if I trust in the love he has shown me in Jesus, I'm done being envious. I'm done with comparisons. It's not like there's a limited amount of God's love that has to be spread around equally. That's such a human, calculating way of looking at it. There's no balance to God's love. There's no humanly quantifiable justice to God's love. God loves each one of us here infinitely and uniquely. Let's give up the comparisons. God's love helps us love each other so much better.

A lot of what passes for love in the world today is a pretty stunted version of love. All the love out there in the world comes from God, we know. But sadly, once our fears come into play, it has a way of devolving into a kind of mutual backscratching. That is not how life is supposed to be. God didn't build me to fill my weaknesses up with other people's strength. Jesus shows us: You become yourself by going out of yourself completely, investing yourself fearlessly in others, no matter the cost. And when you do that...YES, all your weaknesses and all your foolishness is going to be there fully in the light, for everyone to see. But as followers of Jesus, what's there to lose in loving and giving and living with passion and joy and confidence? God will fill us up. As John also says, "there is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear..."

The Holy Trinity teaches us what love is. What LIFE is! To continue with that image, it's really about binding yourself to the people around you, *even though* they're going to disappoint you constantly, even though they're going to break your heart, even though they might get sick, even though they're going to pass away. The Trinity shows us, love and life are bigger than heartbreak and death. Fullness of life, for us sinners, comes out of that cross. Today's world tells us the opposite: run away from that kind of commitment at all costs. So the church has a tough job today. Telling people to trade in that non-committal, self-preserving, unserious way of approaching life. Get rid of it; it's completely selfish, it's shallow. Trade it in for the real God who loves you enough to want you to stand on your own two feet. Who wants you to dive into this world, free and strong in his promise.

No other religion on earth talks about God the way we do. No other made-up god speaks to human beings the way our living God—the Holy Trinity—does; with a love that shows us we are irreplaceable. Whose desire is that each of us, in our uniqueness, will stand forever with him, in everlasting life. No sense in getting bogged down in whether we're worthy of it or not. Of course we're not worthy of it. But he's bound himself to you and me in this permanent marriage. The only thing left to do is rejoice in it. Let's go out into the world with his love, and tell people his name:

The Father, +Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen.