

Sermon: Trinity Sunday
Text: Matthew 28:16-20
Date: June 7, 2020

St. Peter's, Norfolk

In the anthracite coal region of Pennsylvania, there is a town called Pottsville. It's not all that far from where I grew up in Reading, Pennsylvania. In fact, our family would have to pass through Pottsville to visit some relatives who lived farther north. In Pottsville there is a county courthouse which is situated on one of the many hills there. Arising out of the center of the courthouse building is a high tower with a clock on it. The clock has four faces so that the townspeople can see what time it is from any direction. Some townspeople understand this to be four clocks, each with its own face; while others describe it as one clock with four faces. Which is it? It's a mystery....and a matter of some debate in Pottsville.

Today is *Trinity Sunday*, a day that has been celebrated in the Church since the 10th century. Today, preachers around the world will structure their sermons and homilies around an attempt to explain another mystery- one of the most complex and mysterious doctrines that exists in the Christian faith- the *Doctrine of the Holy Trinity*. It's a daunting task, to be sure. It's like trying to explain a three-faced God instead of a four-faced clock.

Over the centuries, many people have attempted to explain the mystery of the Trinity.

St. Patrick, the patron saint of Ireland found the shamrock helpful. As he gazed upon it one day he wondered, ***“Does the shamrock have three leaves? Or is it just one big leaf?”*** He concluded that it is really ***“three in one.”***

A prism catches a single ray of sunlight, and what appears to be one, in reality, is made up of many colors: red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo, and violet.... you know....the ROY G BIV thing. The colors created by the single ray passing through the prism may be seen in unity (as one) or in their individual diversity.

Water is another good illustration. Water can be found in three forms- liquid, solid (ice), or steam. Yet, regardless of the form in which you find it, it is water. Three in one....one in three.

All of us seated here today have different identities but we remain one person. As John Eidam, I am known as ***“Dad”*** to Kristy and Todd. But I am also ***“brother”*** to my four sisters, and ***“Grandpa”*** to Jacob and Justin, my grandsons. I have those

three identities (and more) yet all three are the same person, me! It's true for all of us.

I think the *Doctrine of the Holy Trinity* is difficult to wrap our heads around because we want it to do what it isn't capable of doing. We want it to explain God. It can't do that. No man-made doctrine can ever describe the Divine. The *Holy Trinity* can only explain to us what God has chosen to reveal about Himself thus far.

It's kind of like an iceberg. To describe the tip of an iceberg that can be seen above the water is not to describe the entire iceberg. In the same way, we Christians affirm the Trinity, not as a complete explanation of God, but simply as a way of describing what we've been shown about Him.

The word "*Trinity*" isn't even in the Bible. As I said earlier, the word wasn't even used in the Church until the 10th century. But the "*Trinity*" is implied in numerous places. The earliest Christians discovered that they simply could not talk about God without talking about the three ways in which He had revealed Himself to them. For example:

Our namesake, St. Peter, wrote to 1st century Christians scattered throughout regions of Asia: ***"You have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of GOD THE FATHER, through the sanctifying work of the HOLY SPIRIT, for obedience to JESUS CHRIST and sprinkling by his blood."*** (1 Peter 1:2) (The Father, the Holy Spirit, the Son.)

The Apostle John, in his first letter to Christians living in an unknown location writes: ***".....we have seen and testify that the FATHER has sent His SON to be the Savior of the world. We know that we live in him and he in us because he has given us his HOLY SPIRIT."*** (1 John 4:13-14). (The Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit.)

In today's epistle reading, Paul closes his letter to the Christians in Corinth saying, ***"May the grace of the LORD JESUS CHRIST, and the love of GOD, and the fellowship of the HOLY SPIRIT be with you all."*** (2 Corinthians 13:14) (The Son, the Father, the Holy Spirit.)

And in our Gospel reading, Matthew tells us that Jesus sent his disciples out into the world ***"....to 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)

This is not to say that there are three Gods. It means that there is one God who has shown Himself in three ways- Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. We, as Christians, profess this belief in both the Apostles' Creed (which we will say together in a few moments) and the Nicene Creed.

In the creeds, we affirm that the same God who created and molded the universe also cares about what happens in our lives. God is alive. In fact, He is actively involved in helping to shape the events of our lives. So much so, that He took on human form, came and lived among us. As Jesus, He suffered the same trials that we suffer, and experienced the same feelings we experience. We affirm that Jesus was, at the same time, both fully human and fully divine- another great mystery for another sermon. Jesus was God....God incarnate!

And, in the Creeds, we affirm our belief in The Holy Spirit- God's presence with us to guide us, to comfort us, and to strengthen us in our times of need. The Holy Spirit is God's divine presence in our lives teaching us and leading us into all truth. The Holy Spirit, if we allow Him to, brings us into a close and everlasting relationship with God.

The *Doctrine of The Holy Trinity*- it is complex, and it is mystifying.

Someone once asked Mrs. Einstein if she understood her husband Albert's *Theory of Relativity*. "**No,**" she answered, "***To be honest, I don't understand much of what my husband is thinking. But I do know my husband, Albert.***"

In the same way, we may not begin to fathom the incomprehensible mysteries of God- mysteries like the *Holy Trinity*, but that doesn't mean that we can't know God. God chose to make Himself known to us. He came in the person of Jesus Christ and said, "***I am your brother. Let me show you the Father. Then, by the Holy Spirit, you can come to know God. You can know Him personally.***"

Do you have that personal relationship with God? If not, why not ask Him to further reveal Himself to you. You know most of us have some understanding about God through one or two of his persons- usually either the Father or the Son...perhaps both. Unfortunately, the Holy Spirit often gets neglected.

Why not pray to God and ask Him to reveal Himself to you in all three persons. Then open your Bible, read it, study it....join a Bible Study group, and let The Holy Spirit teach you and lead you into all truth and into a deeper relationship with God.

He wants to do it and He will do it, if you allow Him to. That's His promise.
Amen.