

Matthew 28:19

“The Trinity”

Sing the first verse of Hymn# 64 “Holy, Holy, Holy”

This week we are starting a sermon series called, “This We Believe,” and our first stop is the Trinity. In Matthew 28:19 Jesus commands the disciples to, **“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.”**<sup>1</sup> As I have pondered this verse these questions kept coming to mind. Why did Jesus tell them to baptize in the name of all three; the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit? Why was it necessary to mention all three? What power is there in all three that is lacking in just one?

In Paul’s first letter to the Corinthians Paul right away addressed divisions in the church created by those who meant to make themselves superior to their brothers and sisters in Christ. Some would say, “I belong to Paul;” others would say, “I belong to Apollos,” or, “I belong to Cephas”<sup>2</sup> (1Cor 1:12). Paul correctly admonishes the Corinthians saying, “Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul” (1Cor 1:13)? Did Jesus give the command to baptize in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit in order to prevent this kind of heresy? (pause) Maybe.

In the book of Acts there is a story of Peter and John walking through Jerusalem while heading to the temple to pray. They encounter a beggar who was lame. Peter looks at the man and says, “I have no silver and gold, but I give you what I have; in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk” (Acts 3:6). Peter took the man by the hand and helped him to his feet. Immediately the man’s feet and ankles became strong and he could walk. Peter was not baptizing this man, but at the mere mention of Jesus’ name there was enough power to help this man to walk. If the name of Jesus alone, bares the power to heal then why does Jesus give the command to baptize in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit?

Maybe we should look at the Trinity this way. When someone tells you a story how do you know the story is true? (pause) Maybe we look for someone who saw the same thing? Last week we talked about the words “testimony,” and, “witness.” Maybe, if we want to know if someone is telling the truth we ask for a witness to share the same story. In Deuteronomy 17:6 it says, “On the evidence of two witnesses or of three witnesses he that is to die shall be put to death; a person shall not be put to death on the evidence of one witness.” Life is precious. In Jewish Law a person was not to be put to death without the testimony of two or three witnesses. In a time before CNN, FoxNews, Fake News, and the internet being able to verify someone’s story was important – especially where life and death were concerned. (pause) Especially where life and death were concerned

When Jesus was about to be baptized in the Jordan River John the Baptist tried to prevent Jesus from being baptized by John. John argued, “‘I need to be baptized by you and do you come to me?’ But Jesus answered him, **‘Let it be so now; for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness’**” (Matt 3:14-15). What Jesus has done is bear witness to the need for Jesus’ humanness to come under the authority of Jesus the God head, and God the Father and God the Holy Spirit. Biblical righteousness is about right relationship. In this way the human part of Jesus’ fully human and fully God natures comes into right

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<sup>1</sup> All Scripture references are from the Revised Standard Version.

<sup>2</sup> Cephas is Peter

relationship with God and humanity. When Jesus comes up out of the water, “behold, the heavens were opened and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and alighting on Him; and lo, a voice from heaven, saying, ‘This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased’” (Matt 3:16-17). In this way God the Father and God the Holy Spirit bear witness to and affirm the submission of Jesus’ humanness to God and accept that righteousness of the relationship in full; the full trinity at work on earth through Jesus Christ.

All of this sounds great, but who or what are the Trinity? (pause) Let’s have a show of hands. How many of y’all have children? (pause) How many of y’all have grown children? (pause) Of those who have grown children, how many of y’all talk to your grown children the same way you did when your kids were 5, 6, or 7? (pause) What? None of you? (pause) Why is that? (pause) Could it be there are some subjects which are too *heavy*, or *graphic*, or just too *grown up* for young minds to understand? As I stand here and try to think of examples the evening news comes to mind. There are things on the evening news I don’t want my children to see. I think that is a lot like God. God is super, super BIG. God is way too big for us to understand or imagine. Trying to explain God is like trying to explain astrophysics to a dust mite or a single celled organism. Trying to explain God is like trying to explain something as vast and expansive and sacrificial as a mother’s love to her newborn baby. (pause) God loves us. God loves every one of us. And God loves us enough to try and reveal God’s self to us even though God knows we cannot understand. To help us to better understand who God is God chooses to reveal God’s self as Father, Son and Holy Spirit.



The Apostle’s Creed says, God the Father is the Creator of all of creation. God the Son, Jesus Christ, died to redeem all of creation. God the Holy Spirit sustains our redemption by providing a means for us to continue to repent and grow closer to God. However, this does not mean each part of the Trinity tags out like wrestlers on WWE’s SmackDown. These are different ways God behaves, and chooses to reveal God’s self.

Please take a look at the front of your bulletin. There you will find a “Shield of the Trinity” diagram. The reason the “Shield of the Trinity” is there is to help us all to better understand God is never just the Father. God is never just the Son, Jesus Christ. God is never just the Holy Spirit. God is always all three in one. God created all of creation. God died on the cross, and was raised from the dead. God appeared as tongues of fire at Pentecost. God is still working to restore creation today. (pause) Why is God doing all of this? (pause) God is doing all of this because God loves us.

Sisters and brothers this is a lot of information, but here’s the point. The big “C” Church has too many divisions. There are many who believe our own denomination will split next year. I have to say that breaks my heart. My heart is broken because we are acting like the Corinthians. Did the Catholics create everything? Did the Baptists die for our sins? Can the Methodists sustain the redeemed? Can the Wesley Covenant Association lead the way forward? Can the United Methodist council of bishops put Humpty Dumpty’s pieces back together again? (pause) Brothers and sisters it is up to us. We as individuals and as Central United Methodist

“There is but one living and true God, everlasting, without body or parts, of infinite power, wisdom, and goodness; the maker and preserver of all things, both visible and invisible. And in unity of this Godhead there are three persons, of one substance, power, and eternity – the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost.”

The Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church, 2016, (Nashville: The United Methodist Publishing House 2016) ¶104. Section 3-Our Doctrinal Standards and General Rules: The Articles of Religion of the Methodist Church: Article 1- Of Faith in the Holy Trinity.

Church must remember who it is we serve and what work we have been called to do. Those who have been baptized were baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. We are to, “love the Lord our God with all of our heart, with all of our soul and with all of our might (Deut 6:5). We are to love our neighbor as ourselves (Lev 19:18). This means we are to follow Jesus’ example by seeking a right relationship with God and ALL OF OUR NEIGHBORS: red, yellow, black and white; rich, poor; clean, dirty; young and old we are all precious in God’s sight. Amen?! **Amen!** Amen?! **Amen!!** God is trying to reveal God’s self to all of us because God loves us. God sent Jesus Christ to die for us because God loves us all, and not so we can choose. We are to accept Jesus Christ’s sacrifice and gift of salvation, but we are to accept God’s Lordship too. God is King. That’s higher than any world leader, president, or governing official. That means God is more important than our clicks, our friends, or our extracurricular activities. God is more important than our opinions and preferences. Sisters and brothers to be the Church; the hands and feet of Christ, means laying aside the things that we want in favor of putting first, what God wants. (pause) I confess. I confess to you this morning that I don’t always want to do what God wants. (pause) I don’t always want to do what God wants. (pause) And yet I testify that in all things and ways where I have put God first I have been the better for it in the end. (pause) It isn’t always pleasant in the moment. I am not gonna lie to you. It isn’t always pleasant in the moment. (pause) But it is always better in the end. (pause) Why? (pause) Because God loves us, and in the end as in the beginning – God wins.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,  
Amen.