

Grace, mercy, and peace be unto you from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.
Amen

Today is the feast of the Holy Trinity.

- And as your pastor, that presents a bit of a challenge.
- How does one explain and preach the Trinity?

The Father is not the Son or the Holy Spirit but He is God.

- The Son is not the Father or the Holy Spirit yet He is God.
- The Holy Spirit is not the Father or the Son yet He is God.
- There is only one God, yet 3 distinct persons in the one, true, Triune God.

To even begin to get our arms around this, we have to put aside rationale thinking.

- The Trinity defies our understanding. It is far beyond our comprehension.
- It stymies the greatest of human minds when we try to explain it.

Oh, we can say the words. We can picture it.

- But we can't fully grasp the mystery of 3 in 1.
- All we can do is describe it.....and even then admit that we have failed to capture it.

Pastor Phil Brandt who used to teach at Concordia University in Portland, Oregon; and puts out a weekly blog to help pastor's with sermon preparation says.....

- "Are you NOT befuddled by the Trinity?"
- "Then I would suggest that you have not wrestled with what the Trinity has to say to us."

God says it, so it is so.

- We have faith, we have trust.
- We take God at His word.

But even to do that can be a challenge.

- You see, we tend to believe things that are only within our ability to understand and explain them.
- We tend to put limits on God.
- We limit Him to what we can comprehend and put our arms around.

Our God is much bigger than that.

- And that is a good thing.
- If our God's existence and power and might were limited to what our finite minds can grasp.....we would be in trouble.
- God tells us what we need to know but He is much more than that.

All that said, we ought to be used to and have experience with proclaiming and accepting the irrational.

- How can a God who created us, still love us and give His life for us when we rejected Him?
- How can God still love us sinners and forgive us?
- But He does.

Which brings me more to the focus of our message for today.

- Our Scripture readings assigned for this day do not so much deal with the mystery of the Trinity; but instead the work of the Trinity takes center stage.

And more specific to that.....

- All things point to Jesus as the key lens to seeing the Trinity.

Make no mistake, while the mystery of the Trinity is beyond us, our Creator God is always present with us through the lifting up of His Son and is also in us by the sanctifying gift of the Holy Spirit.

- I've entitled this message, "Beyond us, with us, in us."

God is beyond us.

- Perhaps you have tried to illustrate the Triune God with water.
- Water can be a liquid. It can be frozen as ice. It can be heated to become steam.
- Yet in each state it is still water.
- Three in one.

However, the analogy, helpful in some ways, fails in one crucial way.

- You can't have ice, steam, and liquid all at the same time.
- You have either steam or liquid or ice.
- But the Father is always God. Never is there a time He is not God.
- The Son is always God, never a time He is not.
- The Holy Spirit is always God, never a time He is not.

- All three persons are always and fully God at the same time.

Perhaps another illustration that you have heard or used involves an apple.

- You have the outer peel, the inner core, and the meaty-center.
- One apple and 3 parts.

Again, comparing the Trinity to an apple is helpful in some ways but fails in one crucial way.

- The peel is only part of the apple.
- The core is only part of the apple.
- Same for the tasty part inside.
- But the Father is completely God all the time, not just part of God, not just a third of God.
- The Son is completely God all the time.
- The Holy Spirit is completely God all the time.

How vast is our God and the universe He created?

- The Hubble telescope has sent us pictures of the universe beyond our planet that boggle the mind.
- We can see far distant galaxies, and now astronomers estimate the observable universe contains 2 trillion galaxies.
- Remember from science class that light travels 186,000 miles per second or about 6 trillion miles in a year.
- It would take over 158,000 light years to reach even one of the closest galaxies.
- The universe is about 96 billion light-years in diameter.

Very simply, our Triune God is so far beyond us that we've just barely scratched the surface of who He is and what He can do.

- The Trinity.
- We believe this. We confess this. Even if He is far beyond our comprehension.
- So far!!!
- There's more to all this.

God is beyond us; but now we see God is with us.

- The very last promise Jesus gives us in Matthew, the last words of our text.....
- "Behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

With that promise, everything changes.

- He is no longer merely the distant, too-big to know God.
- We know Him as the God who comes to us, is with us, and will always be with us.

Let's go back to the beginning of Matthew's Gospel, to Matthew chapter 1.

- An angel appears to Joseph in a dream to tell him he must not divorce Mary, even though she is with Child.
- Rather, Joseph is to give the baby a special name, Jesus, for this child will grow up to save the people from their sins.
- Then the angel reveals to Joseph that with this Jesus, a prophecy will be fulfilled.
- "Behold the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call His name, Immanuel. Which means God with us."

God in all power and immensity and majesty becomes one of us, fully human.

- The Father sends the Son, conceived by the Holy Spirit and the small child in Mary's arms is now God with us in fulfillment of the prophecy.

Now jump ahead 30 years, Jesus appears at the Jordan River.

- John is baptizing the people who have come to him in repentance.
- He looks up and sees Jesus walking into the water.
- He resists baptizing Jesus, "I need to be baptized by You, and You come to me?"

But Jesus insists.

- He says He needs to fulfill all righteousness.
- So John scoops up the water, and the Father's voice booms from heaven, "This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased."
- The Holy Spirit descends on Jesus in the form of a dove.
- See the Trinity there? Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Yet, what is Jesus doing in the water? Why is He baptized?

- He is taking His stand with us.
- He will not be separate from us but is already standing alongside us.
- His righteousness, His sinless life and the purity of His mission to save us, will be accomplished as He begins His public ministry to live up to His name.
- Jesus, right from the start, is saving His people from their sins.

Now it's 3 years later still, and Jesus hangs on a cross.

- He is taking on Himself anything and everything that keeps us at a distance from God.
- He takes our punishment—the agony of our sins, the sorrows of death, and even the horrors of hell, which is the complete separation from God.

In a mystery beyond our understanding, Jesus the Son of God, goes through that hellish abandonment when He cries out, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?”

- What we deserve, Jesus takes on, and we are promised an eternal life that is always with our Triune God.

For what happens next once again boggles the mind.

- Jesus rises from the dead on Easter morning.
- He is victorious over death.
- He has conquered the sin that leads to the grave.
- He has crushed all the powers of hell.

Never again will those evil forces make any claim on Him.

- He is given all authority. So He will never leave us.
- He will always be close to us.
- As the apostle Paul says in his sermon from our Acts reading....
- “This Jesus God raised up, and of that we all are witnesses. Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He has poured out this that you yourselves are seeing and hearing.”

This we believe because we have been baptized into the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, just as Jesus told the apostles to do in our text.

- When the water was scooped up and poured over you, when those precious words were spoken along with your name, you were brought into the eternal presence of the Triune God.
- Sin forgiven.
- Jesus living up to His name as we are saved from our sins.
- The prophecy fulfilled once again in our own lives, for Jesus, our Immanuel, is with us.

The God who is beyond us is now the God who is with us—always—forgiving, saving, raising us up to life eternal.

- Beyond us—yes. With us—yes. And more! In us also.
- Jesus speaks about making disciples by baptizing AND BY TEACHING all that He has commanded.

- “Make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, TEACHING THEM to observe all that I have commanded you.”

So just as we turned baptizing in His name into being baptized into His name, so here we turn the teaching into Jesus always dwelling within us.

- How does this happen?
- By the power of the Holy Spirit working through God’s Word.
- Whether in a Bible class or sermon or devotion or conversation or podcast or radio message or wherever else God’s Word is taught, the Holy Spirit works in us to teach us what Jesus said and done.
- And Jesus then dwells within us.

For example, in Psalm chapter 8 verse 4, words we chanted a little bit ago, King David looks at the heavens, the moon, the stars and asks.....

- “What is man that You are mindful of him, and the Son of Man that you care for him?”
- He sees the enormity of God. He knows the majesty of God.
- Yet he believes that God is mindful of him.
- He trusts that God will care for him.
- And so he praises the God of creation who is with him.

As this message comes to a close, let me bring this even closer to us this. I’d like to ask you to imagine going on an early morning walk with me.

- We are in the late spring, early summer and the sun is just starting to come up.
- The trees and grass are turning from a lifeless brown to a vibrant green.
- The air is crisp and clean.
- The birds are singing, you can imagine they are praising the Creator God.
- Otherwise, all is quiet.

Then prayers spring from your lips.

- Part of those prayers echoes David’s words also chanted in our Psalm for today.
- “O Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth! You have set your glory above the heavens.”

You are praising God for the beauty of His creation, the gifts of life, the family and friends that surround you, the purpose of work you’ve been called to , and all the other daily bread He’s placed into your life.

- In a way, you’re hallowing His name, the name you were baptized into.

Who brings this all to our minds, to our lips, from within us?

- The Holy Spirit does this as He works in you and me to teach us, to shape us, form us, nurture us, transform us, into disciples who have learned what Jesus has spoken to the 11 after His resurrection.

Do you see what just happened with that walk?

- The creation that was once so immense and beyond us has now become a moment of praise for the Father who creates such a world of beauty, for the Son who is always with us
- And for the Holy Spirit who teaches us what Jesus has said and done for you and me.

We will not grasp the mystery of the Trinity, although we will confess it in the words of the Athanasian Creed in just a few moments.

- Short of heaven, we will not comprehend just how majestic and immense our God is, but we can know and believe and be confident that He is always with us as the living Lord of all.
- We will not understand how He is 3 persons yet only one God, but we learn what He has done for us and praise Him for it all.
- While the mystery of the Trinity is beyond us, our Creator God is always present with us through the lifting up of His Son, and in us by the sanctifying gift of the Holy Spirit.
- Amen.

And now, may the peace of God which surpasses all understanding, keep your heart and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.