

Sermon for Holy Trinity Sunday

Date: June 7, 2020

Location: St. John's Lutheran Church, Austin, MN

Old Testament: Genesis 1:1-2:4a

Second Reading: Acts 2:14a, 22-36

Gospel Reading: Matthew 28:16-20



Sermon Title: A Life of Worship

Introit: Psalm 16:8-11; antiphon: Ancient Liturgical Text

Hymns:

LSB 940 – Holy God, We Praise Thy Name

LSB 506 – Glory be to God the Father

LSB 810 – O God of God, O Light of Light

LSB 946 – Glory to God, We Give You Thank and Praise

Liturgy:

Divine Service I, p. 151

Songs:

Doxology

That's Why We Praise Him

This I Believe (The Creed)

Father Make Us One

Thy Word

We Believe

Liturgy:

Creative Worship



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Text: The Athanasian Creed

Whoever desires to be saved must, above all, hold the catholic faith.

Whoever does not keep it whole and undefiled will without doubt perish eternally.

And the catholic faith is this, that we worship one God in Trinity and Trinity in Unity, neither confusing the persons nor dividing the substance.

For the Father is one person, the Son is another, and the Holy Spirit is another.

But the Godhead of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit is one: the glory equal, the majesty coeternal.

Such as the Father is, such is the Son, and such is the Holy Spirit: the Father uncreated, the Son uncreated, the Holy Spirit uncreated; the Father infinite, the Son infinite, the Holy Spirit infinite; the Father eternal, the Son eternal, the Holy Spirit eternal.

And yet there are not three Eternals, but one Eternal, just as there are not three Uncreated or three Infinities, but one Uncreated and one Infinite.

In the same way, the Father is almighty, the Son almighty, the Holy Spirit almighty; and yet there are not three Almightyies, but one Almighty.

So the Father is God, the Son is God, the Holy Spirit is God;

And yet there are not three Gods, but one God.

So the Father is Lord, the Son is Lord, the Holy Spirit is Lord;

And yet there are not three Lords, but one Lord.

Just as we are compelled by the Christian truth to acknowledge each distinct person as God and Lord, so also are we prohibited by the Christian religion to say that there are three Gods or Lords.

The Father is not made nor created nor begotten by anyone.

The Son is neither made nor created, but begotten of the Father alone.

The Holy Spirit is of the Father and of the Son, neither made nor created nor begotten, but proceeding.

Thus, there is one Father, not three Fathers; one Son, not three Sons; one Holy Spirit, not three Holy Spirits.

And in this Trinity none is before another; none is greater or less than another;

But the whole three persons are coeternal with each other and coequal, so that in all things, as has been stated above, the Trinity in Unity and Unity in Trinity is to be worshiped.

Therefore, whoever desires to be saved must think thus about the Trinity.

But it is also necessary for everlasting salvation that one faithfully believe the incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Therefore, it is the right faith that we believe and confess that our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is at the same time both God and man.

He is God, begotten from the substance of the Father before all ages; and He is man, born from the substance of His mother in this age: perfect God and perfect man, composed of a rational soul and human flesh; equal to the Father with respect to His divinity, less than the Father with respect to His humanity.

Although He is God and man, He is not two, but one Christ: one, however, not by the conversion of the divinity into flesh, but by the assumption of the humanity into God; one altogether, not by confusion of substance, but by unity of person.

For as the rational soul and flesh is one man, so God and man is one Christ,

Who suffered for our salvation, descended into hell, rose again the third day from the dead, ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of the Father, God Almighty, from whence He will come to judge the living and the dead.

At His coming all people will rise again with their bodies and give an account concerning their own deeds.

And those who have done good will enter into eternal life, and those who have done evil into eternal fire.

This is the Christian faith; whoever does not believe it faithfully and firmly cannot be saved.

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Grace to you and peace, in Jesus' Holy Name. Amen.

This is the Sunday when we pull out that big 'ol Athanasian Creed. It does go on a bit, doesn't it? Creeds. We have three of them:

The Apostles' Creed. It was not written by the Apostles but was a creed, or statement of belief, reflecting what the Apostles taught. It was written in its first form in the 100's, to combat false teachings.

The Nicene Creed. It was written at a gathering, of the Christian leaders throughout the world, in the city of Nicea in the year 325. It was an answer to false teachings about Jesus that were entering the Church. A major player in its writing was Athanasius.¹

False doctrine has often plagued the Church. Even today strange teachings rise up under the guise of Christianity. They span hyper-legalism to hyper-"God is love." One of those false teachings that regularly raises its head is about how to understand the Trinity. In the 600's there was an effort to really lock that down, and so another creed was written.

The Athanasian Creed, named after Athanasius who was a true hero of the faith back in Nicea 300 year earlier. It was originally written as a liturgical text to be sung, (in Latin). It was later used as a spoken declaration of faith, and has come to be the third of the three ecumenical, or universally accepted, creeds in the Holy Christian Church around the globe.

So what does it say? It confesses:

Whoever desires to be saved must, above all, hold the Christian faith. Whoever does not keep it whole, and undefiled, will without doubt perish eternally. And the Christian faith is this, that we worship one God in Trinity, and Trinity in Unity, neither confusing the persons, nor dividing the substance.

That is what this day, and this creed, are about: worship. That is what the church catholic, (meaning the true Holy Church Christian Church of all times and all places) has always been about: worship.

Christianity is not first and foremost about morality, following rules and living properly. It is not first and foremost about having the right head knowledge about God. Those things are important, but they are not of first importance. Those things cannot come first. They must follow and flow from something else. That

¹ A Christian theologian, a Church Father, the chief defender of Trinitarianism against Arianism, and a noted Egyptian leader of the fourth century.

something is worship. Not just any worship, but as the creed said, “that we worship the Holy Trinity.” This worship is not about what we do, but what about what God does for us. What God does for us is give life. Apart from Him we have no life, physically or spiritually.

The Bible readings for today were all about life. We began in the beginning, and heard again how wonderfully, carefully and exactly God made all things. Nothing by chance, nothing left out. Everything was perfect, and “very good.”² Why is that important? Because God did not just create everything. He took His time. He created you. There may be things about you that you don’t like, that you wish you could change, but in God’s eyes you are who are you for a reason, and a purpose. Though marred in varying ways by sin and sin’s affect, God made no mistake with you. He gave you life and rejoices in that life. He sustains your life. You are not your own,³ or on your own.⁴ Your Father is caring for you, providing for you, and giving you all that you need for this body and life, because He loves you. He will not stop loving you.

It is the second reading that shows us just how deep His love is. It is a love that could not stop even when it was not returned. When Adam and Eve decided to love themselves more than God; when they decided to grab what they could, rather than receive from God; when they decided God was not good and instead followed the word of Satan, (all of that in just one day), still God did not reject them. He did not kill them and start over. He did not withdraw and say “Fine! Do it yourself!” In His love He promised a Savior. A Savior who would defeat the death they had invited into the world. God promised a Savior who would and did give them life again.⁵ Life in a physical resurrection on the last day,⁶ and life in a spiritual resurrection right now by faith.⁷ The physical life we threw away, the spiritual life we threw away, is restored in Jesus.

Why is that important? Because God did not just save the world. He saved you. Your death He defeated; your sin He washed away, each and every one; every sin in your thoughts, words, deeds, and desires. He knows them all, which we think is probably not such a good thing, but if He knows them, you can be sure He died for them all, and now gives you life from them in the forgiveness of all your sins. That is not just a better life. That is the life that your heavenly Father always intended you to have. Eternal life with Him, in joy and perfection.

- 2 Genesis 1:31
- 3 1 Corinthians 6:19
- 4 Matthew 28:20
- 5 Genesis 3:15
- 6 Romans 6:5
- 7 Ephesians 2:8

The forgiveness from God is not a partial thing, or an overlooking of sin, but a full payment for every lasts one of them from the greatest to the least. It is all done, completely. Done in love. A love that gives, and will not stop giving. Which brings us to the Holy Gospel that was read today.

God continues to sends His disciples out to give that life,⁸ through teaching and Baptizing in His Holy Name, the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.⁹ Where His name is, there He is. Where He is, there is life, life through the Spirit of God. The Holy Spirit who proceeds from the Father and the Son,¹⁰ lead us to the Son, and the Son take us to the Father.¹¹ So that the relationship we had with God in the beginning is restored.

The confession we speak today in the creed explains that God is triune, that He is infinite, incomprehensible, eternal, uncreated, and almighty. That is the God who calls us and loves us. God wants us to know Him, and to return His love. So He has revealed Himself to us in His Son. In Jesus of Nazareth the invisible One was made visible; the incomprehensible One made Himself comprehensible; the infinite One enters our finite universe; the eternal One came to die; the almighty became a man.

In Jesus God joins Himself to us so we can know Him. In Jesus God joins Himself to us so all that is His become ours. In Jesus God joins Himself to us so His life become our life.¹² The life that we will receive again today, as His forgiveness and life are proclaimed, and as His very life-giving body and blood are placed into our mouths to eat and to drink. That is worship. The place where heaven and earth come together in Jesus Christ.

From this worship and life flows all other things, the good works we will do, the outreach, the care and love for others, the increasing knowledge of His Word and all other honorable and good works.¹³ From this worship and life flows the strength to resist the wiles and ways of the devil, the world, and our own sinful flesh.¹⁴ From this worship and life flows the faith to face the trials and tribulations of this life with confidence and hope.¹⁵ From this worship and life flows our life.

Today, the Feast of the Holy Trinity, is not just about some old abstract doctrines, or a long creed, and challenging words. Today is about life. The life of

8 2 Corinthians 5:18

9 Matthew 28:19

10 Athanasian Creed: 'The Holy Spirit is of the Father and of the Son, neither made nor created nor begotten, but proceeding.'

11 John 14:6

12 Romans 6:5

13 Philippians 4:8-9

14 James 4:7

15 1 Peter 4:12-13

God given to us. The life of God which is not something in which we strive to be saved. It is about salvation, worship and life. The life that God gives is true life. Life which not even death can defeat.

This is the Christian faith, the faith that the Holy Christian Church of all times and all places has believed: God gives and we receive; God speaks and we confess what He has told us to speak; God gives life and we live His life. This is true worship. Receiving that life, living that life, and confessing that life. This is true worship. Worship that begins with God, comes to us, and from us flows into all the world.¹⁶

That is true orthodoxy, true and right worship, in, with, and under the name that is above all names. The name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Amen.



**Proclaim God's Word,
Encourage one another in faith,
Witness to God's love and
Serve all people**