

Sermon for Holy Trinity Sunday

Date: May 30, 2021

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

Old Testament: Isaiah 6:1-8

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

Gospel Reading: John 3:1-17

Sermon Text: John 3:1-17

Sermon Title: The Trinity is Love



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

Hymns:

- LSB 498 – Come, Holy Ghost, Creator Blest
- LSB 507 – Holy, Holy, Holy
- LSB 571 – God Loved the World So That He Gave
- LSB 966 – Before You, Lord, We Bow
- LSB 954 – We All Believe in One True God

Liturgy:

Divine Service: Sola Scriptura

Songs:

- The Battle Belongs to the Lord
- Doxology
- Father I Adore You
- This I Believe
- We Believe

Liturgy:

Creative Worship



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KAUS 1480 AM Sun. 9:00am



Text: John 3:1–17

Now there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. This man came to Jesus by night and said to him, “Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher come from God, for no one can do these signs that you do unless God is with him.” Jesus answered him, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.” Nicodemus said to him, “How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother’s womb and be born?” Jesus answered, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not marvel that I said to you, ‘You must be born again.’ The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.”

Nicodemus said to him, “How can these things be?” Jesus answered him, “Are you the teacher of Israel and yet you do not understand these things? Truly, truly, I say to you, we speak of what we know, and bear witness to what we have seen, but you do not receive our testimony. If I have told you earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you heavenly things? No one has ascended into heaven except he who descended from heaven, the Son of Man. And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.

“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.”

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

Wouldn't it be incredible to have the opportunity Nicodemus had? To sit down with Jesus, one on one. No distractions, no crowds, no interruptions. Especially for Nicodemus who was well-qualified for the conversation. He was one of the great teachers of Israel. To be able to sit down with Emanuel and ask about heavenly things, but this night was more than he bargained for. Before Nicodemus could ask a question Jesus takes the conversation to a place Nicodemus had not planned to go, but where he needed to go.

That is how God works. He drives the conversation, not the other way around. In the beginning, at creation, God drove the conversation. He spoke and it was so. It was God who drove the conversation with Adam and Eve after they sinned, and with all the Old Testament saints, like Abraham, Moses, Isaiah, Jeremiah and so many others. When it came to our re-creation, our redemption, our rebirth, God drove the conversation. He sent His Son, the Word made flesh, into the world, to save a world lost in sin and eternal death.

So we should not be surprised that the same is true today right here, with you and your life, it is God who drives the conversation. If you think of your life as an ongoing conversation with God, it has a rhythm to it. God speaks, we listen. God gives, we receive. We breathe in His Word, and then breathe out His Word in prayer, praise and witness. In this conversation of life, we are filled with questions. We want to know why things happen; why other things don't happen. There is so much we would like to know. Wouldn't it be incredible to have the opportunity Nicodemus had. To sit down with Jesus, one on one. No distractions, no crowds, no interruptions.

It's not we who drive our conversation with God. He is in control. He takes us where He wants us to go; where He knows we need to go. Through the events in our lives, through all the ups and downs, through all the twists and turns, through all the Word we hear, our conversation is driven by God. His goal is to teach us what we need. That being Himself. Our Triune God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, is driving the conversation so that we believe, and in believing have eternal life.

As much we would like to drive the conversation it is better that we don't. We would move in a direction focused on what we know, and what we want

to know. With God it is about what we don't know. It is about not knowing enough to ask. It is also about what we don't want to know.

That's why Nicodemus doesn't understand what Jesus is telling Him. Born again? He's thinking of physical birth and the things he knows, earthly things. Jesus is telling Him of heavenly things. With these words Jesus is telling Nicodemus that sinful people don't need just a little extra work, a little revision, a little improvement. We need a new life, that comes through new birth. We need a whole new start. We need a death and resurrection. Jesus said, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.

When we hear those words we usually think of heaven, but to see the kingdom of God means more than simply getting home, going to heaven. It is to see the kingdom of God for which we pray when we say "Thy kingdom come" in the Lord's Prayer. His kingdom of glory and power, by which He is working and ruling all things for the good of those who loves Him,¹ and His kingdom of grace.

Unless we who are blinded by sin are born again from above, we will be like Nicodemus, not able to see the kingdom of God sitting right in front of us. Sitting right there in that Baptismal Font. Sitting right in front of us, in the Lord's Supper on this altar. We need to be reborn. So what is this new birth? What is this birth from above?

Well, think about babies. A baby needs to learn everything: how to see, how to hear, how to walk and how to talk. They are rocked in a cradle, carried in your arm, cleaned when they mess themselves, they are coddled in every way. This is what we are. As we are born again from above, we are new people who must learn, grow, be carried in the the arms of, and rocked in the cradle of, the Church. We need to be cleaned when we mess ourselves. We call that Confession and Absolution. Babies can't care for themselves and neither can we. This is not something we do because, like new born babies, we don't know what we need. God needs to drive the conversation.

Just as you were brought into this world physically by another, so it is spiritually. It is, Jesus said, by water and the Spirit. It is in the water of Holy Baptism that you were born again from above and given a new life through the death and resurrection of Jesus. Through that water, where your Savior

1 Romans 8:28

has brought His Word and promise, your old Adam is drown to death with Jesus in his death, and a new person is brought to life in Jesus' resurrection.

Some might think that's asking too much of Holy Baptism. It's only a little water. It would be asking far too much if it were just plain water, but where the Word of God and His promise and Spirit are present, expecting anything but new life is expecting too little.²

Nicodemus didn't get it. His great learning and wisdom wasn't doing him any good. So Jesus gives him a picture of what He means as He brings the bronze snake in the wilderness to Nicodemus' mind.

“Remember your Sunday School lesson Nicodemus? When Israel was wallowing in rebellion and sin and they could not get themselves out. They could not rescue themselves. They wanted to. Those fiery snakes biting them were painful and deadly. They wanted out.

That is our situation today. People are trying to overcome sin and sin's affect in all kinds of ways, trying to create some earthly utopia where we can live beyond the reach of sin. Try as we might all our attempts fail. You may be able to separate yourself from all those sinners “out there” but you cannot escape the sinful poison coursing through your own veins that has been there from the moment of your conception.³ You cannot escape that truth. Wherever you are, sin is. Israel dying in the wilderness is a picture of us. The same satanic serpent that bit Adam and Eve, and that bit the people in the wilderness, is still working and biting us in our lives as well. Injecting the potent and powerful poison that kills – eternally.

As powerful as sin is, there is a more powerful antidote. It comes, not from us, but from God. It comes, not from within us, but from outside of us. It comes from God:

who loved the world, that He gave His only Son, that
whoever believes in Him should not perish but have
eternal life. For God did not send His Son into the

2 Luther's Small: The Third part of Baptism – How can water do such great things?

Certainly not just water, but the word of God in and with the water does these things, along with the faith which trusts this word of God in the water. For without God's Word the water is plain water and no Baptism. But with the Word of God it is a Holy Baptism, that is, a life-giving water, rich in grace, and a washing of the new birth in the Holy Spirit, as St. Paul says in Titus, chapter three: “He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that, having been justified by His grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life. This is a trustworthy saying.” (Titus 3:5-8)

3 Psalm 51:5

world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through Him.⁴

We are saved when Jesus takes our condemnation and death away from us and puts it all on Himself. Jesus did that for all people. That is what the cross is all about. He did it for you in Holy Baptism. There we are born again from above. We look to the cross, just like Israel looked to the snake on the pole, and we live – eternally.

Holy Baptism is a great and powerful thing. The Lord and giver of life keeps His Word. He speaks and it is so.

When we drive the conversation, we want to know what we want to know? When Jesus drives the conversation He takes us in a different direction, to teach us to know what we need to know. To see the power of sin that was carried by Jesus to the cross, and to see that power of sin overcome and defeated. It may not be that we have all the answers we want, but we do have the answer we need. In that answer we have life, the life we need. Whoever believes in him will not perish but have eternal life.⁵

So what should we believe? What we confess here every week. That our Triune God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, is driving the conversation of our lives, that we may hear, that we may see, that we may believe. That you believe in God's Word made flesh on the cross, for you. That you believe God's Word of forgiveness spoken for you. That you believe God's Word in the water which gives new life for you. That you believe God's Word which makes simple bread and wine into His life-giving body and blood, for you. That you believe His love, and that all of this is for you. Your life in Christ is not about what you do. It is about what the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit have done for you.

Satan doesn't care who you are. He doesn't care about your Ph.D. or your grade school education. He doesn't care whether you are wealthy or poor. He doesn't care whether you are young or old. He is an equal opportunity murderer⁶ who doesn't care who you are because you cannot overcome him on your own. No good work, no strength, no knowledge of yours can stand against him.

4 John 3:16-17

5 John 3:16

6 John 8:44

You can't, but there is One who can, and did. There is One who spoke against him in the Garden, who spoke against him in the wilderness, and who speaks against him now. It is He who speaks a powerful Word! Our Savior, Jesus the Holy Christ of God, the Son sent from the Father who is working in us still through His Holy Spirit, exorcising Satan from us in Holy Baptism, breaking Satan's power in forgiveness, and giving us a transfusion of His blood which takes that the old sinful, poison coursing through our veins and replaces it with His life-giving Blood.

Satan is an equal opportunity murderer. Jesus is an equal opportunity new life-giver, who has come to give His life to all. He does this so that all may be born again from above. We are no longer hopeless, but hopeful. No longer dead in sin, but alive in Christ. No longer blind in darkness, but filled with the marvelous light of life.⁷ You, born as a child of God, may live as a child of God forever.

Nicodemus got more than he bargained for that night with Jesus. It turned his life upside-down. When you're upside-down in sin Jesus turning you upside-down means He is really turning you right-side up? That is not always an easy thing. Faith is often a struggle, as so much of what we see and feel in this sin filled and sin affected world contradicts what faith believes. While there are many things we do not know and cannot understand, the cross shines through it all, saying: 'Here is God for you.'

It is to the cross that Jesus is driving the conversation. In all that happens in this world look to Him and live.

Amen.

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



7 1 Peter 2:9