

NEW BEGINNINGS LUTHERAN CHURCH

The Holy Trinity – May 26th, 2024 (11:11 am)

HOLY, HOLY, HOLY!

Psalm 29

Isaiah 6:1-8

Acts 2:14a, 22-36

John 3:1-17

The Glory of the Lord of Hosts Shines in Mercy, Forgiveness and Salvation

When Isaiah “saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up,” he cried out and confessed that he was “a man of unclean lips.” If even the holy angels cover their faces in the presence of “the King, the LORD of hosts,” how can sinful humans stand before Him (Is. 6:1-5)? Yet, the glory of the Lord is saving grace, and with “a burning coal” from the altar the angel touched Isaiah’s lips, removing his guilt (Is. 6:6-7). Likewise, from the altar of Christ’s cross, by the ministry of the Gospel, “the whole earth is full of his glory” (Is. 6:3). For He was crucified, died and was buried, “according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God,” and God “raised him up, loosing the pangs of death” (Acts 2:23-24). He “received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit” (Acts 2:33), and He raises up the fallen world by pouring out His life-giving Spirit upon sinners through His earthly Means of Grace. To give this saving gift, God sent His Son into the world, “that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:16-17).

**“Holy, Holy, Holy! Lord God almighty!
Early in the morning our song shall rise to Thee;
Holy, Holy, Holy, merciful and mighty!
God in three persons, blessed Trinity!” (LSB 507)**

There is a special hymn called “Holy, Holy, Holy” (LSB 507) that many churches usually sing in the Holy Trinity Service. (***Holy, Holy, Holy! Lord God almighty! Early in the morning our song shall rise to Thee; Holy, Holy, Holy, merciful and mighty! God in three persons, blessed Trinity!***)

The origins go back to Isaiah’s vision in the temple when the Lord calls him to be a prophet. While call stories in the Bible are usually set in everyday places, Isaiah’s call occurs in the nation’s central sanctuary.

We hear about Isaiah and the call he receives from God here on Trinity Sunday when we celebrate the mystery of the one and only God as three co-equal persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Have you ever noticed that the closer we sinners come to our holy God, the more we notice our sin? So, Isaiah receives a call from God to serve and preach and the response of his listeners is, as you say in English, underwhelming. We too have received a call from God to serve and to preach and we too experience frustration as so many people ignore what we have to say.

As Christians, one of the most basic aspects of our faith is a belief in the triune God. The Holy Spirit assures us that this is indeed the case but our rational mind has trouble grasping the concept.

HOLY TRINITY

Let's take a moment to cover biblical basics about the Holy Trinity. We can state it as clear and as plain as: "We declare that we believe and teach that there is one divine essence, undivided, etc., and yet, that there are three distinct persons of the same divine essence and coeternal, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. This article we have always taught and defended, and we believe that it has, in Holy Scripture, sure and firm testimonies that cannot be overthrown. And we constantly affirm that those thinking otherwise are outside the Church of Christ."¹

Then some questions may arise:

Where is Trinity in the Bible? – It is a recurrent question that we can biblically address. There's no place in the Bible where we read literally "Infant Baptism" or "Christ used wine in the Holy Supper" as well. Yet they are solid, fundamental teachings. The Triune God can be found throughout the entire Holy Scripture, from Genesis to Revelation.

Three Gods? Three Persons? One person, three manifestations of one God? If it sometimes looks a little hard to understand, it's because it *really is* for our mind. Actually, it's impossible. That's why we remain with the Biblical teaching: *there is only one God. But there are 3 persons in the Godhead.* It is not that they are just three different manifestations of one God, like "Solid, liquid, and gas" are three different manifestations of water, but "Person" here means *that which subsists by itself.* They are distinct between each other, but equal in everything, co-eternal, and consubstantial, and each is God, whole and entire. "Of these Persons each one is the whole God, besides whom there is no other God." Luther.²

I cannot see but can I believe? – Well, do we believe that courage, respect, honesty, perseverance, patience, love are real? Do we believe all these things exist? Well, how can we prove that? How can we show our eyes and intellect that they exist? Therefore, just because you cannot see or "prove" under human standards it doesn't mean that it's not true.

This is the Christian God. We can try to figure some analogies out as we try to explain it. But they would still be just a poor attempt to illustrate the mystery of Holy Trinity. **He is One in Three. He is Three in One.** If we depart from this Truth, we depart from the Bible. We depart from faith.

The Trinity, the one and only God, offers the supreme, life-enhancing model for human society and the earth community. The one God is three persons of equal dignity. The three are distinct. None is isolated from others. None is absorbed by others. What distinguishes each of them is their relationship with the others.

The three divine persons participate in a graceful circle dance with one another, a joyous dance without end. Through our creation, redemption, and sanctification, we are invited into the circle to join this dance, and thus enjoy the awesome hospitality and graciousness of God.

¹ The Apology of The Augsburg Confession, Article I.

² Also, no Person does the other Person's Work. The Father is the Creator. The Son is our Savior. The Holy Spirit is the Comforter, the Faith Giver. For example, the Father didn't die on the Cross, neither did the Holy Spirit, but the Son did. Jesus became flesh and died for us.

As the Church we are called to serve others by grace of God. We are, pastors and lay people together called and commissioned for the task of helping persons, families, communities, institutions, and nations come to manifest, based on our faith in the triune God, a life that blesses all people and all creation.

BORN OF WATER AND THE SPIRIT

"Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God". What I see here in this text of John 3:5 when Jesus emphasizes the birth of "**water**" and "**spirit**" is the following:

"**Water**" and "**Spirit**" belong to each other and point to Christian baptism. Water symbolizes the regenerating and cleansing washing of sins, but this is only and effectively done by the Holy Spirit spiritually.

At the same time, the text itself points out that the Holy Spirit is like the wind (*v. 8*) and no human being can understand, govern, or control the movement of the wind. In other words, the new birth that Jesus is talking about is the work of the Holy Spirit exclusively. The sacrament of baptism is a divine order for Christians that is carried out with Water (*visible element*) and Spirit (*Word of God*), but as the text itself shows the "**wind**", The Holy Spirit, can work in different ways. He is not limited to baptism. Therefore, it justifies that the wrongdoer on the cross, who was not baptized but saved by faith in Christ, according to Jesus' own words (*Luke 23:40-43*).

In Mark 16:16 it is written: ***"Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned."*** It means that faith is the most important and precious thing. Through baptism and Holy Communion, the Holy Spirit acts and we can see more in terms of the visible elements (*water, bread and wine*) that were instituted by God. But the Holy Spirit also acts beyond these visible elements, like an uncontrollable wind ... and this can be through the pastor's message, a testimony or explanation by a Christian, a Christian act, a Christian song/hymn in the church or in another place, a prayer, a biblical reading, Christian video, devotional reading, etc... and this becomes more difficult to perceive because it does not have a clearly visible element like water, bread and wine.

In the Old Testament, there was no baptism, there were other marks such as the circumcision that were instituted by God, for example. But above all, ***the Spirit of God acted on hearts in different ways and the determining factor for going to heaven was faith*** and trust in the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

In other words, we need to be born of the water and Spirit, by the grace and goodness of the Triune God, understanding that the Holy Spirit works through baptism water and also where the Holy Spirit of the Triune God wants to work according to God's Holy will like a wind.

HOLY, HOLY, HOLY!

Our Triune God is "**HOLY, HOLY, HOLY**". It means that our God that is three in One. And in everything He does, He always leads us back to Himself, to His goodness and grace. For He is the **Creator, Saviour** and **Comforter** of our world, our life, our heart. The number 3 has some very interesting and important connections to our daily and practical life. Take a look at *these* examples:

*3 proofs of God's love: **Jesus Christ - The Bible - Life;***

*3 main aspects of this love: **Unconditional - universal - never ending;***

*3 means of God's action: **Word - Baptism - Lord's Supper;***

*The biggest command to love God: **With heart , with Soul , with mind;***

*The 3 enemies to be overcome: **The Devil - The World - Our Flesh.***

*3 verbs of action: **Love - Live - Learn;***

*3 actions of discipleship: **Baptize - Teach - Love;***

*3 moments in which we can count on Him: **Before - Now - After;***

*3 ways of talking with God: **prayer - praise - thanksgiving;***

*3 ways of showing God's love: **To speak - To sing - To live;***

In conclusion, I would like to invite all of us to continue our joyful service for our awesome God – the three in one triune God in the world around us. That's the blessed call to serve that we, as individuals and as a congregation, have received from God. Let me take a moment to point out some "threes" that we may have not noticed before. We live in a city with 3-syllable – **Regina**, in our 3-syllable country, **Canada**, with the 3 means of Grace: **Word, Baptism** and **Holy Communion**. There are many **bodies, minds** and **souls** that very much need the precious message of law and gospel that we are called to preach. **Today. Tomorrow. Always.** Amen.