

"A Trinitarian Salvation"

Acts 2: 22-36

June 16, 2019

The Holy Trinity

When you entered the sanctuary this morning, I don't know if you skim through the bulletin to see the order of service. If you did, your eyes probably fell upon the – gasp – Athanasian Creed and you probably winced and thought, "Oh, no! It's Trinity Sunday!" To many people, Trinity Sunday (or more accurately The Holy Trinity) means hauling out the Athanasian Creed, a creed so long and repetitive that we cannot confess it in unison. Instead, we have to take turns between pastor and congregation in order to do it.

The Sunday on which we commemorate the Holy Trinity means more than the yearly use of a long Creed. It is a unique holiday on the church calendar because it neither commemorates a person nor an event. Instead, it commemorates a doctrine. Some people think that means a worship service that resembles more a classroom lecture than a service of worship.

And for what purpose? People think that knowing, believing, and confessing the Trinity is simply a dull academic exercise. Since the rise of books like Dan Brown's, *The Da Vinci Code*, some people contend that the concept of the Trinity is not even biblical, but something made up at the Council of Nicaea in 340 A.D. Whether a dusty old doctrine or an ecclesiastical conspiracy, a lot of people think that the Holy Trinity is neither important or helpful to us in our search for meaning in our earthly life and assurance of our salvation in the life to come. However, in what could be called the first Christian sermon ever preached recorded for us in our text for today, St. Peter shows that salvation itself and life with God is a Trinitarian thing.

When trying to construct something that will serve a useful purpose, it is important to have a plan. When someone wants to put up a home or a building of some sort, he doesn't just start building. An architect will draw up a plan so that what is constructed will serve the purpose for which it is desired.

God desired not to be alone. So, He had a plan. He would create a universe out of absolutely nothing. He would focus His attention on one planet where he would create creatures to delight and amuse him. If you read the book of Job, God delights in all of the different creatures. God would create one special creature in His image, man, and would give him authority over all things. God would love and bless humanity and humanity would return obedience and love. God placed them in a garden called Eden. Everything was perfect – literally – until the plan was broken.

God's plan had not failed because of faulty design or imperfect construction. Humanity – Adam & Eve – broke God's plan by rebelling against His law, doing what God had forbidden, and deserting Him. This meant that all of humanity would be infected by Adam and Eve's sin and rebellion and would be separated from God now and forever.

When a plan fails or is not followed, it's always good to have Plan B in place. What God the Father did after banishing Adam and Eve from His presence was not exactly reverting to Plan B. From eternity, the Father knew this would happen and had

already planned for it. The Father would send Someone to crush Satan who had tempted Adam and Eve away from God and initiated this rebellion. Just who this person would be is named by Peter at the beginning of his sermon. It would be Jesus, the Son of God.

A plan is only as good as the one who is tasked with carrying it out. In this case, the one who carried out this plan was perfect. The Father, according to St. Peter, confirmed the identity of Jesus of Nazareth as His Son with mighty works and wonders and signs that He did through Jesus in their midst. This was all part of what St. Peter calls the “the definite plan and foreknowledge of God.”

What was the Father’s definite plan? His Son would take on human flesh and blood and take our place under the Law of God. The Son, Jesus, came prepared and carried out that plan perfectly. He had to do basically two things. Jesus had to do what we daily failed to do: perfectly and always keep the Law of God. Jesus had to make up for what we had done: all of the evil that we had done in every thought, every word, and every action.

The Word of God tells us that the Son of God was tempted in every way as we are, but He never sinned. He always did what His Father commanded and He never ever did anything that His Father ever forbade. His righteousness – His holiness – was credited to our accounts.

In order to make up for our failures, our sins, our trespasses, our transgressions, and our iniquities, Jesus, the Son of the Father, would have to offer the perfect and all-inclusive sacrifice for the forgiveness of the sin of the world. The only sacrifice sufficient was Himself. St. Peter’s rough on the people in his sermon. He condemns them for crucifying and killing Jesus by the hands of lawless men, the Roman governor and His soldiers. However, Peter says that this, too, was “according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God.” They sinned by rejecting and killing the Savior. However, because He was rejected and killed on the cross, we have forgiveness of sin, peace with God, and enjoy His blessing.

God the Son showed that He had perfectly and completely won forgiveness and salvation for all people throughout the ages up to and including ourselves by sacrificing Himself. As He came closer to death, He cried out triumphantly, “It is finished!” All of the work of perfection was finished. All the work of sacrifice was finished. God’s plan for rescuing us and all who believe in Him was finished at the time of Jesus’ death. The Father demonstrated this finality, Peter says, when “God raised him up, loosing the pangs of death, because it was not possible for him to be held by it.”

So, the plan for our salvation was designed by the Father and carried out by the Son. That’s all well and good. However, how would the plan and its results get out to the people? For, if the plan of salvation is not known, believed, or trusted, then no one will be saved. It’s like winning \$10 million in the Publishers Clearing House sweepstakes. If you don’t receive a registered letter, notifying you or you don’t have the camera crew with balloons and flowers outside your door, the money does you no good. Despite the fact of having it, if you don’t know it, it does you no good.

The power to get this message out and into the hearts of humanity everywhere is the work of the Holy Spirit. Peter says of Jesus, “Being therefore exalted at the right

hand of God, and having received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit, he has poured out this that you yourselves are seeing and hearing.” The Father, after the Son completed His plan, exalted Jesus to His right hand and gave to him the promised Holy Spirit. Several times Jesus had promised that He would send power from on high. This power would be the Holy Spirit, the Helper. Jesus then poured out the Holy Spirit upon the people gathered there on Pentecost. As I said last week, the power of the Holy Spirit is able to bring people into relationship with the Father through the Son. The Holy Spirit brings life to those who are dead in their trespasses and sin. He brings faith to those who have not understood or have not believed. He brings peace with God to those who have been hostile to Him.

All of you are here today because of the power of the Holy Spirit in your life. Many of you received the Holy Spirit when you were baptized as St. Peter promised to the people after that sermon and now have faith in your Savior, Jesus Christ. Some of you may have received the Holy Spirit when you heard the Word of God from a friend or family member, when you were invited to Sunday School as a child, or when you heard the Word of God when someone invited you to Divine Service.

But that’s not all. That is not the extent of the power of the Holy Spirit. He not only is able to bring you to faith and eternal life through Jesus Christ, He is also able to empower you to speak of that faith and share the Word of God in whatever situation you find yourself. We only have to go as far as the preacher in our text for today to know that is true. Simon Peter was probably the most unlikely preacher there ever was. He often stuck his foot in his mouth by speaking before thinking. He disagreed with Jesus regarding the way of salvation to the point that Jesus referred to him as Satan. Peter promised that he would never ever leave Jesus and would sooner die than desert Him. Yet, in the Garden of Gethsemane, when confronted by soldiers and guards, Peter ran away. Perhaps the worst was Jesus’ prophecy that Peter, not only would not remain faithful to his vow, but would actually deny ever knowing Jesus, not once; not twice; but three times.

If the Holy Spirit can empower such a man with all of his frailties, weaknesses, and foils to boldly stand before thousands of people to condemn them with the Law of God and to comfort them with His Gospel, then He can certainly use anyone in this building to do the same. You have the same Holy Spirit as Peter did. If you don’t have the same frailties, weaknesses and foils as Peter had, rest assured that you have different ones.

Yet, with the Holy Spirit filling you and empowering you, you can speak the Word of God to anyone and everyone. Some may be called to do that publicly by a congregation in a pulpit. Some may be appointed by a congregation to teach that Word in Sunday School or Bible Class. And every living Christian, empowered by the Holy Spirit, is free to speak the Word of God in his family, at his job, in his community, and anywhere in the world.

So, knowing and confessing the Holy Trinity is more than a yearly celebration, the dusting off of an ancient Creed, or an academic or philosophic exercise. It is an opportunity. It is an opportunity to know the plan of the Father. It is an opportunity to confess belief in the work of the Son, Jesus Christ, in carrying out the plan of the

Father. It is an opportunity to strengthen faith in this plan by the power of the Holy Spirit and, by that same power and that same Spirit, to proclaim the plan of salvation to all the world. May God Father, Son, and Holy Spirit bless us, encourage us, and empower us to do just that. Amen.