

Sermon for 1st Sunday after Pentecost, Holy Trinity, May 26th, 2013

John 16:12-15

Blessings to you and **peace** from God the Father, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ,
and the **Holy** Spirit. Amen

Each year, the Sunday **after** Pentecost, is known as Holy Trinity Sunday. You **may** have noticed in our announcements for today there were a **couple** of slides of artist *concepts* of what the Trinity might ‘look like’ if we were to put it down on paper. In an article in the *Christian Century* magazine from **1998** entitled “So Explain It to Me”, Mary W. Anderson wrote, (quote) “This is the day of the church year that calls us to ponder a **teaching** of the church rather than a **teaching** of Jesus. The scriptural readings provide Bible **backup** for a non-scriptural word: Trinity.” (end quote) How does one go about **explaining** the unexplainable?

Many pastors on this Sunday chose to preach on one of the **other** texts for the day-**mostly** because-the concept of the Holy Trinity is something that is pretty *abstract, complex, and hard* to make “logical” sense of. And isn’t that what **most** of our world is built around—logic and those things which make **sense** to us. We are a pretty *methodical* group of people. We have sayings such as: putting one foot in front of the other, going from point ‘a’ to point ‘b’, keeping on the straight and

narrow, and so on. We are rather good at knowing how to get from **one** place to another when **logic** comes into play. But how about when it does not? How do we go about **describing** something which makes **little** sense to these logical minds of ours? The concept of the Trinity is something which for the most part **does not** make any logical sense. *Such is God.*

Today we are called to **step out** of these logical boxes and try to understand the *complexity* of God as best we can; because in the Trinity we are talking about the heart of the Christian faith. We are talking about the God who **empties** the divine self, we are talking about the God who takes on the **form** of a servant, who is **crucified** for us which of course is the person of Jesus Christ, and we are talking about God the Holy Spirit who comes to be our **advocate** and to **guide us** as we make our way in this world. How does one go about **explaining** the unexplainable?

How can there be **1 person in 3 people** or **3 people in 1 person** where each entity functions individually? We sing—God in 3 persons, blessed Trinity, the eternal Three-in-One. How can all three co-exist together yet function differently? God-maker and preserver; God as Creator source of all Wisdom; God-Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; one God—Father-holy, tender and merciful, Jesus the Son-God incarnate who now reigns at the right hand with God the Father in heaven, and

Holy Spirit-as the comforter, advocate, and defender. Then there is the Apostle's Creed where each week we profess our faith in **each of the 3** persons of the Trinity *separately*. *Oh my!!!!*

These are the type of questions which theologians and scholars have been debating for **many** centuries. As a matter of the fact St. Augustine, whom you may or may not have heard of from way back in the **4th** century, wrote **15** books over a period of **10** years regarding the Holy Trinity. And did you know that the word 'trinity' is **not even** in the bible? It is a **human** concept in which we attempt to define God; which no matter **how** hard we try will **never** happen. Our own Martin Luther said, (quote) "Today we **celebrate** the festival of the Holy Trinity. It is indeed true that the name "Trinity" is **nowhere** to be found in the Holy Scriptures, but it has been **conceived and invented** by man. This word signifies that there are **three persons** in God. It is a **heavenly mystery** which the world **cannot** understand. The great universities have invented distinctions, dreams, and fictions by means of which they would **explain** the Holy Trinity, and they have made **fools** of themselves." (end quote) How does one go about **explaining** the unexplainable?

Martin Luther hit the nail on the head when he called the Holy Trinity a '*heavenly mystery*'. We are **no** better at trying to figure out this '*heavenly mystery*'

today than we were way back in the 4th century when St. Augustine was trying to make sense of it all. *Such is God.*

Many scholars now say that while it is **inconceivable** for we humans to know anything **certain** about the *internal essence or substance* of the Trinity, there is a lot that we **can** understand from the Trinity's *external self-revelation*. By that I mean we humans **can** experience God and the Trinity being revealed in our **own** lives. Here are **4 examples** of the Trinity and how it is revealed: **1.** Each person of the Trinity engages in *distinctive personal characteristics*-each makes a **specific contribution** to our lives and the world. **2.** The Trinity *works together*—God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. God does not work as an **isolated** part of the Trinity. **3.** The **3** persons of the Trinity each have *their own function*; yet, the work of **no one of them** is elevated **higher** than the other. Which was something that was evident in the slides we had during the announcements today. **4.** The **combination** of the Trinity's work takes place through the *self-giving* love of the other. *The work of each is done for the fullness of life of the other and for the redeeming of all creation.* In other words—they work in harmony for the good of the other and all that which has been created.

In our **gospel** reading for today Jesus tells us that the Spirit of truth will guide the disciples to **all** truth as the Spirit will **only** speak whatever he takes from

Jesus and it will be declared. There was to be **continuity and harmony** in what was to be **taught** to the believers through the Spirit. The Holy Spirit would **guide** the disciples, **declaring** the truth of what Jesus had taught them when we was with them as well as **revealing** the depth of Jesus' teachings and what those teachings **meant** for future generations.

The Holy Spirit brings **honor and glory** to God and to the Son. The Spirit **does not** seek his own glory. The Spirit **does not** seek his own followers. The Spirit **does not** seek to displace God or Jesus. **That** is why Jesus told his disciples that the Spirit would **glorify him** and in turn **declare that glory** to the disciples. The Holy Spirit seeks to serve. Service to God, Jesus, other believers, and the world—is that not also the essence of what it means for us to be Christians as well?

Through the Trinity, may we **also** catch a glimpse of the the fact that **we** are **not** isolated individuals competing against **other** isolated individuals; we are beings who are **bound** together in endless relationships of mutual **giving and taking**. These relationships are the **foundation** of our identity as Christian people as a **diverse** community who finds **unity and strength** through faith in a *loving* God who is **not only** Father, but God the **Son**, and God the **Holy Spirit** even if that concept is somewhat beyond our **logical** human understanding to explain the unexplainable. *Such is God. AMEN.*

