

The Holy Trinity

June 11, 2017

Sermon by Pastor Sam Wolff

The Holy Gospel according to Saint Matthew. (Matthew 28: 16-20)

Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, even to the close of the age."

The Gospel of our Lord.

Today is Holy Trinity Sunday. And it's a Sunday that we celebrate the one God who has been revealed to us in three parts.

I would like you to turn to your bulletin cover this morning, because what it says is probably far better than I can. Though the word "trinity" is not found in the scripture in today's Lesson, the Second Reading includes the apostolic greeting that begins the liturgy. "*The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.*"

In the Gospel, Jesus sends his disciples forth to baptize in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. More than a doctrine, the Trinity expresses the heart of our faith. We have experienced the God of creation, made known to us in Jesus Christ, and with us always through the Holy Spirit. We celebrate the mystery of the Holy Trinity in word and sacrament, as we confess the Creed, and as we are sent into the world to bear witness to our faith.

The reflection of our faith is in the Holy Trinity, and this is pretty much in part impossible to truly explain. And yet it is the core of our belief. We began in the beginning, it was just read, there is one God who created. And through the Holy Spirit, who also comes up in Genesis, that goes into the second part of the Triune God. And then, from the fall of Adam and Eve, we're still in Genesis, the promise is made of God the Son coming to be among us.

And in our Lessons today, we see a reflection of our faith revealed in each one of the Lessons. In the Gospel, "The great commission." Those words have been celebrated in great art, in magnificent hymns, in countless people. This was the scripture most often associated with mission, outside of one's country. Going to, well, first of all, going to Europe, going throughout Europe, and eventually spreading to all corners of the world. And there is something about each of these Lessons that ties them together, the Holy Spirit, the Son, and God.

And one word that I found over and over in these Lessons is the word “all.” How much authority has been given to Jesus, the third part of God? Well, it says this in our reading, when Jesus says, “all authority has been given to me.” And Jesus was very aware of his authority. And Jesus did not act on it alone. Every time he says his authority comes from the Father, he acknowledged that he and the Father are one, and that this is where his power comes from. He didn’t just strike out the cheaters in the temple. He did so with the authority of God. He didn’t touch the lepers or tell us to love our enemies. He didn’t give us a new commandment. He did this all with the authority of God.

And then his command to teach. Where should we go to teach? Well, again, this “all” word comes up. You go into all of the world. And what should we teach? Well, Jesus said, “*Teach all that I have commanded.*”

Jesus is radically inclusive. All the world. It shows that God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit, cares about all the world. The boundaries are stretched far beyond what we generally think, and our narrow borders are redefined.

There was a time when I thought that “all of the world” was just over in Africa, or Asia, or some other part of the Third World. But it’s foolish to limit the all-ness of God. The all that Christ is speaking about is just as much for St. Paul as it is for Monrovia, Liberia. Each and every person, each and every nation, needs the opportunity to hear about the wonderful love and the healing grace of God our Father.

Christ’s commandment that I am to teach all is not limited to baptism and God talk. And I think, certainly in the early mission movement, the thought was, you know, we have to baptize, and once we baptize, well, we teach, too. But the first and most important thing is baptism. This is not really the meaning of what Jesus is saying. Jesus specifically includes “*all that I have commanded.*” And it’s Christ’s commandment that I teach. Teach not only about baptism, but about the ways that he walked, the things that he did. Jesus says to teach “*all I have commanded.*”

One of his greatest commandments is “*Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all you mind, with all your soul, and your neighbor as yourself.*” His commandment included feeding the hungry, giving water to the thirsty, welcoming the stranger. The “all” of Jesus includes a lot of sacrifice, unlimited forgiveness, and sharing what we have. All that he commanded, including reaching out, touching others, breaking down walls and barriers.

There is something about the same word “all,” all-inclusive, in the Old Testament reading. It was a long reading. Thanks for reading it. But it’s a reading we need to hear, because it reminds me that “all” of this, everything we have, comes through God our Father.

God created the heavens and the earth, all the flowers, all the trees, all the birds, and all the beasts. God created all the people. The central truth of Genesis has nothing to do with six days. But rather it has all of the world as its focus. In all of the world there is one God, one God who made everything.

There is not one god for the moon and the other god for the sun. And, likewise, there is not a god who made people like us, and another god who made people different

from us. There is not a god for Mexicans, and Germans, or Americans, and Canadians, and Swedish. There is one God for all people. And there is not one God for Muslims and another god for Christians. I know this is often debated, and many people think, well, you know, our God can't possibly be Allah. Well, we don't know.

What we do know is there is one God. And we do not have a patent on the name "God." God created all of this world. And we have to remember this in our struggle with the misuse of God's creation.

Well, if God made all things, then God cares about all things. And it was just read to us this morning, God created, and then God sat back and said, *"It is good."* And so who am I to be less than a good and faithful servant to all of God's world.

There is something about that unity. That word "all" comes up again in a beautiful psalm,

*"O Lord, our Sovereign God,
how majestic is your name in all
of the earth!"*

The majesty of God cannot be compartmentalized, to be just taken out of the box on Sunday mornings or at our family devotions. The word of God is clear. His name is majestic in all places and all times.

In our Christian life, we are called to do all. We can't be half Christians. We can't have half faith. Again, Christ gave it his all. It was all or nothing for Jesus all the way to the cross. And so there really needs to be something in our response that includes "all."

We were never commanded to love the Lord our God with some of our hearts. Nor were we commanded to love and forgive some of our neighbors.

We are called to love all of God's children, all of God's Creation. We are called to discipleship all the way, to sell all we have, to feed all of his sheep, to welcome all people, to love all, forgive all, be kind to all. Christ's love for us was all-inclusive. He took the cup, he said to his disciples, *"Drink you all of this for all of your sins are forgiven."* And after he said that, he gave all of his life for all of us.

Finally, again, there is something about the unity and the all-ness in the Epistle. God speaks the Holy Trinity, and then he reminds us,

*"May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and
the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all."*

Amen.