

Sermon Trinity Sunday June 7, 2020

Grace, mercy, and peace be unto you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Obviously, today is Trinity Sunday. The truth about our God being a triune, trinitarian God has been evident since the beginning. Even in the account of creation that opens the bible we see the Trinity in action. The Spirit hovers over the formless waters. The Father says, "Let there be light," and, "Let us make man in our image," and not long after we find the preincarnate Jesus Christ walking with Adam in the cool of the evening. All three of the Trinity are right there in the first pages of scripture.

The Christian church has acknowledged and celebrated the Trinity since the beginning. It wasn't until the year of our Lord 1334 when Pope John XXII approved the celebration of Trinity Sunday for the church in the West.

All along there have been connections in worship to the Triune God from the invocation that starts our service in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit to the numerous Trinitarian conclusions to the psalms, hymns, and prayers right down to the three steps one must take to gain access to the chancel, that sacred space that is filled with the presence of the Triune God.

We can point to all sorts of evidence in the Bible that shows we worship a Triune God, but one of the clinchers is when Jesus right out tells the disciples to baptize new disciples in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. We receive this three-part formula of the name of God right from Jesus' own lips. Anyone having a problem with God as Trinity can take it up the good Lord.

There are many benefits we enjoy from having the identity of the one true God. Two benefits are: 1) We can distinguish between false gods and the true God; and 2) It puts us in the position to receive the blessings from the only God who can grant them.

One afternoon back in 1981 or 1982 I was studying in the library at Concordia College in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. I think I was a sophomore at the time. There was another middle-aged gentleman at the same table. He was not a student at the college. He was using the college's library to do some of his own research. We struck up a quiet conversation while seated at the table. I think I was reading St. Augustine's famous work *Confessions*. He was on a totally different track. He told me he was doing research to back up his premise that God was only one person and Christianity's concept of a three-person or triune God was not biblical, but actually had been influenced by and drawn from the goodly number of pagan deities at the time that also featured some sort of three-god mythology. This man's work does not seem to have had any influence or effect. As far as I can tell, the church is still worshipping a three-person God! Sometimes I still wonder whatever became of that man I met in the college library.

My experience that day does illustrate how far off the track people can get when it comes to the true nature of God. Our churches understanding of God does not come from other people's ideas and inventions about the divinity. Rather, it is taken directly from what God teaches in the bible.

What about all the other religions we find in the world today? Are they all barking up the wrong trees? Unfortunately, yes. While most religions contain some truth and a few are quite profound in their understanding of select divine truths, none worship the one true God. He says as much here in Isaiah 44:

Thus says the Lord, the King of Israel and his Redeemer, the Lord of hosts:

'I am the first and I am the last, and there is no God besides Me.' Isaiah 44:6

This means Allah, Thor, Buddha, every other deity, the sun, moon, nature, and fire are all not to be worshiped. Why? Because God has not revealed himself in those ways, and because of what St. Paul teaches here in 1 Corinthians:

No, I imply that what pagans sacrifice, they sacrifice to demons and not to God. I do not want you to be partners with demons. 1 Corinthians 10:20

Demons are sneaky and clever. They lead people away from the Trinity by posing as false gods and leading people into false worship. We all know people who have been taken in by their attractions.

Knowing who the one true God really is has all the benefits. Last week many of us got the notice that because of Covid-19 our denomination's Camp Pioneer on Lake Erie would not be having any summer camp, retreats, weddings, or any other such events. They did indicate, however, that cabins would be available for rent. Our family thought it would be fun to go up to Pioneer for a little bit this summer, so we called the Pioneer office to see about reservations and of course got the voice mail. Then I remembered I had the personal cell phone number for Brian - the fellow who had taken over Pioneer's operations back in January. I knew him quite well from my work with Pioneer in previous years. He has worked at camp before as assistant program director and when I had our youth up at camp or was leading camps myself, we had each other's phone numbers to communicate throughout the day. I texted him we were interested in a cabin and he got back to me in like one minute. No voice mails. No waiting. No wondering. Instant access. How wonderful!

We have God's number. Jesus tells us:

You did not choose me but I chose you. And I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask him in my name. John 15:16

Direct access is a wonderful thing. I think we all take this for granted. We can ask God for whatever we need in our Christian lives and he will answer. Many of us remember the days when we had cell phones and the only calls we got were from people who were close to us, whether family, friends, or in business. Then something changed and now we get calls on our cell from all sorts of unwanted parties wanting to sell something, get our vote, or extend the warranty that is supposedly ending on our car that is only 6 months old. But you know, does the Lord ever tire of us contacting him on his direct line? Never. In fact, he welcomes it. This is part of the meaning of the second commandment – *You shall not misuse the name of the Lord*. What does this mean? *We should fear and love God that we may not curse, swear, use witchcraft, lie, or deceive by His name, but call upon it in every trouble, pray, praise, and give thanks.*

We thank and praise the Lord for giving us his name upon which we may always call. Praise and thanks to him who has revealed himself to us as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit that we may know the one true God and rightly worship and serve him.

And now the peace of God guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.