

The Feast of the Holy Trinity
St. John 3:1-15
June 11th, 2017
Sts. Peter & Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church, UAC
Greenville, SC
Pastor Jerald Dulas

Whoever Believes in Him Should Not Perish

In Nomine Iesu!

In the Name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

Prayer in Pulpit before Sermon:

O Lord, send out Thy Light and Thy Truth, let them lead us. O Lord, open Thou my lips, that my mouth may show forth Thy praise. O Lord, graciously preserve me, lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be rejected. Amen.

Grace, mercy, and peace be to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior + Jesus Christ. Amen.

Today is the Feast of the Holy Trinity. There are four “Feast days” in the Lutheran liturgical calendar—Christmas (or the Feast of the Nativity of our Lord), Easter (or the Feast of the Resurrection of our Lord), Whitsunday (which was last Sunday), and Trinity Sunday. These are the four “Feast days” within the Lutheran liturgical calendar, all other special days are referred to as “Festivals.” But today, we have the last “Feast day” of the Church’s year. This day leads us from the “Festival” time of the Church’s year into the “common time” of the Church’s year. This season will take us all the way to the new Church year.

The Church celebrates this transition by observing a key doctrine: the doctrine of the Holy Trinity—the teaching that there are three Persons in one Godhead, and one God in three Persons. However, our Gospel reading, at first glance, does not seem to fit the theme of the day. There are certainly better texts that teach the doctrine of the Holy Trinity than this pericope from St. John the Apostle and Evangelist. St. Matthew 28 comes to mind, “Baptize them in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost.” That reading actually mentions all three Persons of the Holy Trinity. The Gospel for our Lord’s Baptism is another reading that would fit with today’s theme, for all three Persons are mentioned at His Holy Baptism. Also at His Transfiguration, all three Persons are mentioned. The Gospel reading we have from St. John 3 does not even mention the Persons of the Holy Trinity. Therefore, it would seem, at first glance, that this text does fit with the theme of the day.

However, this Gospel is rich in its explanation of Holy Baptism. At our Holy Baptism, the Triune Name—Father, Son and Holy Ghost—is placed upon us. We are given the Name of our God. We are called His children and bear His Name. He claims us as His own dear children by placing His holy Name upon us. The sign of the holy cross is placed upon our foreheads and our hearts to remind us that it is through our Lord + Jesus Christ’s suffering and death that we have new life through our Triune God.

This reality of ours—that we are claimed by our heavenly Father, our redeeming Brother Christ, and our sanctifying Spirit—envelops the entire Divine Service. The doctrine of the Holy Trinity is woven into the Divine Service from beginning to end. The reason is that it serves as a constant reminder to us of our Holy Baptism. It is meant to remind us throughout our worship that we have been claimed by the holy, invincible and eternal Triune God, Who created us, Who redeemed us, and Who makes us holy through the pure preaching of the Word and the administration of the Sacraments according to our Lord

Christ's institution. The Divine Service is structured so that we are constantly reminded Whose we are, and what gifts we receive on account of having the Name of the Triune God placed upon us.

We can understand these things, because we are "born of the Spirit." Nicodemus, from the Gospel of St. John, struggles with this concept. He cannot understand how someone can be born a second time. Our Lord is, however, speaking of a spiritual rebirth. He is speaking of having the Holy Ghost poured into our hearts and minds so that all that is unholy within us that we inherited from our father Adam, would be killed and destroyed, so that a new Adam might arise and live before God in righteousness, innocence and blessedness.

We are a new creation. We have been re-made. All that is sinful within us has been drowned and destroyed. We rise from the waters of Holy Baptism, clean and pure—without sin. We are holy. We are rightly called "saints." For that is what a saint is, it is someone who is holy. We are holy—sinless and hating sin—on account of our Holy Baptism. We are a new creation, because the Triune God, chose to place His holy Name upon us. He claimed us for Himself. He chose us. He elected us. He chose all mankind to be saved before the foundation of the world. But, many have rejected Him. They refuse His election. This is because mankind is full of sin. Sin wars against the Triune God. Sin is contrary to the Triune God. That which is holy cannot exist with that which is unholy, that is, sinful.

This is why at our Holy Baptism, all that is evil and sinful within us, must be destroyed and killed, so that a new spirit might dwell within us. This new spirit clings to our Triune God in faith. And, we have the promise of our Lord + Jesus Christ from the Gospel reading today, that "whoever believes on Him shall not perish." We are saved eternally on account of what the Triune God has done for us. On account of our Holy Baptism, we are sinless in God's eyes. Out of His great love for us, the heavenly Father, sends His Son + Jesus to purchase us with His own innocent shed Blood. And, He gifts us with eternal life with Him and all the saints who have gone before us.

However, you might say, "But Pastor, we daily sin much. We are indeed, 'poor, miserable sinners' as we confess to the Triune God every Sunday." Ah, but dear Christian, you have been baptized. You but need to remember your Holy Baptism when the devil attacks you with the guilt and shame of your sin, to remind you that your sins are no longer credited to you. You are free from sin. You are free from the penalty of sin. When you remember your Holy Baptism, you beat down Satan under your feet, you stand with Christ as a victor over sin and death.

Our enemies are relentless. They do not want us to have any peace in this life. They want us to forget our Lord's mercies. And, unfortunately, we are forgetful people. We easily forget what our Lord has done for us, especially when the trials and tribulations of this life attack us from all sides. We forget our Lord's mercies when we are racked with guilt and shame for coming the same stupid sin, over and over again. We are embarrassed. We doubt God can love such a poor, miserable sinner like us. And, our enemies are constantly in our ears with this nonsense. They are relentless.

This is why the Divine Service is structured the way it is. For, our ears, our hearts, our minds, our consciences are drawn continually to our Lord's grace and mercy. We are reminded throughout the Divine Service that we are claimed by the Triune God—He placed His Name upon us. He calls us His own. And, because He reveals this to us, our faith is strengthened and renewed. This is why we should not desire to rush through the Divine Service. We are here to enjoy God's gifts. We are here to find comfort and rest from the weariness of this life. We are here to be in the presence of our Triune God, and receive His gifts of forgiveness, life and salvation.

Here in worship, we have a true Sabbath rest. Just like we are taught in the Third Commandment of Luther's Small Catechism. Here in worship we are reminded who we are, and whose we are. We are reminded that our enemies have no claim over us, for we are claimed by the Triune God. We bear His

Name. We have been baptized, therefore, we have put on the works of Christ, and bear His righteousness. Here in this place, today, we receive His gifts, both in Word and in Sacrament—through preaching and the Lord’s Supper, and through the remembrance of our Holy Baptism.

This is truly a day for feasting. This is a day for celebrating. For, the Triune God—Father, Son and Holy Ghost—has claimed us as His own. We are free from sin. We are free from death. We are free from the power of the devil. Our enemies have been defeated, and now we can rest in the Lord’s Word and rest in His gifts. What a great thing to celebrate! We have the promise of our Lord + Jesus, that all those who believe on the holy Triune Name of Father, Son and Holy Ghost, shall not perish, but have everlasting life. O Lord, grant this unto us all on this day when we remember Thy Name and all Thou hast done for us on account of the Lord + Jesus Christ, and through Thy Holy Ghost. In the Name of our Lord + Jesus Christ. Amen.

Prayer in Pulpit after Sermon:

Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto Thy Name give glory! I will extol Thee, O Lord, and I will praise Thy Name forever and ever. Amen.

The Votum:

The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Amen.