

The Feast of the Holy Trinity

St. John 3:1-15

June 7th, 2020

Sts. Peter & Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church, UAC

Simpsonville, SC

St. Michael and All Angels Evangelical Lutheran Mission, UAC

Augusta, GA

Pastor Jerald Dulas

How Can These Things Be?

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 God, heavenly Father: We poor sinners confess that in our flesh dwelleth no good thing, and that, left to ourselves, we die and perish in sin, since that which is born of the flesh is flesh and cannot see the Kingdom of God. But we beseech Thee: Grant us Thy grace and mercy, and for the sake of Thy Son, Jesus Christ, send Thy Holy Spirit into our hearts, that being regenerate, we may firmly believe the forgiveness of sins, according to Thy promise in baptism; and that we may daily increase in brotherly love, and in other good works, until we at last obtain eternal salvation, through the same, Thy beloved Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord, Who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, one true God, world without end. Amen.

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

Nicodemus, the Pharisee, comes to our Lord + Jesus Christ at night. He comes away from the crowds; away from the rest of the Pharisees. He comes in the cover of night out of fear of the Jews. He can see with his eyes the events going on around him. This Man must be the Messiah. No one is able to do the signs that the Lord + Jesus does, except that Man be sent by the Triune Lord God. Nicodemus wants a plain answer—as did the Sanhedrin at our Lord's trial. Unlike the Sanhedrin, though, Nicodemus wants to believe that this Man is the Messiah—the One sent by the Triune Lord God to redeem the people of Israel. Nicodemus wants to believe that he has a Savior—a Redeemer—in this Man + Jesus.

What is the Lord's answer to Nicodemus' question? The Lord + Jesus gives him Holy Baptism. He gives Him a work of the Triune Lord God, for that is into Whom we are baptized. We are baptized into the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost. He places His Name upon us; claims us as His own. In claiming us as His own, we who are born of the flesh from our mothers and fathers, are now born of the Spirit. We have received the Holy Ghost with the mark of the holy cross both upon our foreheads and upon our breasts through the washing of regeneration called Holy Baptism. We are now His children, born out of Him. We are born from above; from Him Who created us from the dust of the earth. We are now born out of the Spirit.

We who are flesh and blood are now gifted with the Holy Ghost. He creates and sustains faith and life in us. We are re-created into the family of the Triune Lord God. We are become a new creation. We now bear the righteousness of the Christ, the Lord + Jesus. We are credited with His works and His merits. His perfect obedience to the Law and will of the Triune Lord God is now credited to us as our perfect obedience to the Law and will of the Triune Lord God through faith. His suffering and death on the tree of the holy cross for the atonement of our sins is now credited to us through faith in the

waters of Holy Baptism into which we were washed. The Old Adam in us has been drowned and killed. We are now a new creation—a new heir of the heavenly Father—adopted as sons through the work of our Brother, the Lord + Jesus Christ.

This wonderful gift is too full of awe for us to fully comprehend in this life as sin still inheres in us. It prompts us to ask the same question that Nicodemus asked when he came to the Lord + Jesus at night: “How can these things be?” We ask a similar question when we study our catechisms: “How can water do such great things?” The answer? “Clearly it is not the water that does it, but the Word of God that is in and with the water, and the faith that trusts this Word of God in the water.” In other words, it is a work of the Triune Lord God. He promises forgiveness of sins, eternal life and salvation will be given to all those who are baptized. In faith we cling to that promise. We believe that what our Triune Lord God declares in this blessed Sacrament happens to us, has happened. We believe that by it our sins are forgiven; that the Old Adam has been drowned and killed; that we are new creations filled with the Holy Ghost.

This is why we take this blessed Sacrament so seriously. It is why we do *not* forsake our baptisms by thinking of them as some long distant past event that has no meaning for our lives today. We live in our Holy Baptism every day of our life. Every time we confess our sins to God the Father, whether we do that in our private prayers or before the minister that He has placed before us to hear our confession, we are living in our Holy Baptism. When we daily confess our sins—when we daily live in repentance, that is, daily contrition and faith—we are living in our Holy Baptisms. Our sinful hearts of stone and sinful flesh, are transformed into living hearts of renewed flesh and spirit. This is a daily process. Our Holy Baptism is not something we should set aside as some past event, but must be lived in every day through contrition and faith.

This is also the reason why we obey the command of our Lord + Jesus on the day of His Ascension to go into all the world and baptize all nations in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. “All nations” includes all people, infants and adults alike. This promise of the gift of the Holy Ghost is for all people everywhere of all ages. For by it, faith is created in those who are baptized; faith which clings to the promises bestowed upon the baptized in those waters connected to God’s Word. Those who deny baptism to infants endanger the eternal soul of those they refuse to baptize until they can speak for themselves. They have made the work of the Triune Lord God into a work of man; something they do to obey God’s command instead of treating it as the gift it is meant to be.

For we are conceived and born in sin. We are filled with sin from our mother’s womb. Our Triune Lord God knows our lost condition and seeks our redemption fervently, first by the First Person of the Holy Trinity, our heavenly Father, sending the Second Person of the Holy Trinity into our flesh to dwell among us and live the perfect, sinless life that we cannot and suffering and dying for us, and secondly, by gifting us with the blessed Sacraments, through which the Third Person of the Holy Trinity works to bring us into the family of the Triune Lord God.

It is truly amazing! How can these things be? What have we done to deserve such grace and mercy? *We* have done nothing! Through faith we see, even as Nicodemus did, the great signs which only the Triune Lord God can do. He does this for us out of His great love for us. He redeems us from sin, death and the power of the devil. He destroys all that is sinful in us and makes us a new creation. He gives us faith to believe that these things were done for us, even if they are too great for our comprehension. How can poor, miserable sinners like us ever be worthy of the multitude of graces that our loving Triune Lord God desires to pour upon us? We are not able to do this. We are not able to cause ourselves to be reborn—to be born from above. It is only the work of the Triune Lord God Who is able to redeem us from our lost condition.

Out of fear of the Jews, Nicodemus comes to our Lord + Jesus at night to determine for himself whether this Man was the One sent by the Triune Lord God. Having been lifted up on the cross, just as Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness, our Lord + Jesus now comes to us to draw us into His marvelous, eternal light. He comes to us to draw us to Himself; to take us out of the darkness of sin and death into an eternal life with Him. He comes to create and sustain faith in us by sending to us His Holy Ghost. He comes to us in the light of the revelation that our salvation is found in Him and only in Him. He enlightens us who sit in the shadow of death and darkness by His Holy Ghost. Through Holy Baptism—through our being called into the family of the Triune Lord God—we are made new creations.

Therefore, we need not fear as Nicodemus did. We need not only come to our Lord + Jesus at night in the dark. We can boldly confess in the daylight that He is the One sent from the Triune Lord God to redeem mankind from all of their sins, and justify all those who believe on His Name. May the Lord + Jesus Christ, Who was lifted up on the tree of the holy cross, like the serpent in the wilderness by Moses, preserve us steadfast in this faith until we die, and bring us into our eternal home in Heaven to dwell with Him and all the saints and angels for all eternity. In the Name of our Lord + Jesus Christ. Amen.

Prayer in Pulpit after Sermon:

O God, the Creator and Savior of the world, Who hast made Thyself known in the work of man's redemption, as the mystery of the ever adorable Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, Three in One and One in Three: reveal in us, we beseech Thee, the full power of this faith, into which we have been planted by Baptism, that, being born of water and of the Spirit, we may by a life of holiness be formed into Thine image here, and rise to Thy blissful presence hereafter, there to join, with the song of the seraphim, in praising Thee, world without end. Amen.

The Votum:

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

Soli Deo Gloria!