

The Feast of the Holy Trinity

St. John 3:1-15

June 4th, 2023

Sts. Peter and Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church, UAC

Simpsonville, SC

St. Michael and All Angels Evangelical Lutheran Mission, UAC

Augusta, GA

All Saints Evangelical Lutheran Mission, UAC

Pawleys Island, SC

St. Bartholomew Evangelical Lutheran Mission, UAC

Fort Myers, FL

Pastor Jerald Dulas

Except One Be Born Anew

In Nomine Iesu!

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

Sermon Text:

“Jesus answered and said unto him, ‘Verily, verily, I say unto thee, “Except one be born anew, he cannot see the kingdom of God.””

Prayer in Pulpit before Sermon:

Almighty and Everlasting God Who hast taught us to know and to confess in true faith that in three Persons of equal power and glory Thou art One True and Everlasting God and to be worshiped as such: We beseech Thee, keep us at all times steadfast in this faith against whatsoever may assail us, O Thou, Who livest and reignest, ever, 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.

When we were born according to our flesh, we had no knowledge of it. We did not sit in counsel with our father and mother and tell them that we need to be born from their union. Our earthly father and mother did not ask our opinion; they did not give us a choice to be born or not. Our earthly birth was not up to us. We came into this world unaware of what was the cause of our creation. It was the union of husband and wife that created us. Only the union of a man and woman can create a new child. Only the coming together in the bonds of holy matrimony of our father and mother led to our birth in the flesh. We did not have any knowledge or choice in the matter. Such is the case for everyone born in the world.

The same is true of our spiritual birth. Just as we could not cause our earthly birth. We cannot cause our spiritual birth. First, we are dead in our sins and trespasses. This is how we were born into this world. We were born dead. Dead people do not possess the ability to anything. They certainly do not possess the ability to make themselves alive again. Dead people remain dead, unless the Triune Lord God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, raises the dead person from the dead. We are born anew—literally, born from above—only by the working of the Triune Lord God.

This is after all, my dearly beloved, the Feast that we celebrate today. Indeed, this Feast is celebrated for eight days. It possesses what we call an “octave.” An octave is a week-long celebration of a particular feast. In our Church calendars, we have four high feast days. Each of these high feasts

have an octave; an eight-day celebration of the feast. These four high feast days—the Feast of the Nativity of our Lord, the Feast of the Resurrection of our Lord, the Feast of Pentecost (which we celebrated last Sunday, and today is commemorated because this is the octave of that feast), and the feast we celebrate today, the Feast of the Holy Trinity.

We celebrate each of these high feast days with much solemnity and pomp and circumstance. One observance we make on all four of these high feast days is the confession of the Athanasian Creed. This Creed is especially poignant for today, when we celebrate the mystery of the Holy Trinity. We went into great detail the relationship between the three Persons of our One Lord Triune God. The Father, Son and Holy Ghost are three Persons, but they are all the Lord God. Each Person of the One God has a part in our creation, redemption and sanctification. Each Person of the One Lord God is responsible for our salvation. We are born anew only through the work of the Triune Lord God, and each Person as a hand in making us alive again.

For we were indeed dead in our sins and trespasses. We could not make ourselves alive again. We did not choose to be made alive, nor have knowledge beforehand, how it came to be. We did not enter into counsel with the Triune Lord God to make us alive again; to make us born anew. Our corruption and sin would have prevented us from taking part in even approaching the Triune Lord God, let alone sitting in counsel with the Creator and Maker of the universe. Indeed, we had no hand in our redemption from sin and death, either. We who were trapped in sin, and dead in our trespasses, could not free ourselves from the bondage of sin, nor make ourselves alive again. We were trapped under the Law. The Law continued to condemn us. We were unable to keep and fulfill the Law of God. Daily were we held in its bondage.

But our Triune Lord God, Who made and created us, saw our wretched estate. The Father, Son, and Holy Ghost saw that we could not save ourselves. They saw that we indeed had no knowledge of how corrupt and wretched we were, for people dead in their sins and trespasses are unaware of their dead condition. The preaching of the Law; that we daily broke the Ten Commandments, only led us into further despair and hopelessness. After the Word of the Law came, we could only see our wretched estate. This is why our heavenly Father, in His abundant mercy, planned our souls' salvation by sending to us His Only-Begotten and Beloved Son, our Lord + Jesus, the Christ.

The Christ came down from His throne in Heaven, and took upon Himself our flesh. He obeyed the will of His Father, and became as one of us, but without sin. He bore our flesh in order that He might fulfill the Law which we are unable to fulfill. He kept the Law which we are unable to keep. He obeyed the Law which we are unable to obey. He kept perfectly that which we are unable to keep perfectly. But that was only one part of the Father's will to save us. Not only did our Lord and Savior fulfill perfectly the Law bearing our flesh, so that being both God and Man He could cleanse our flesh from dead sins, He also bore our flesh to the tree of the holy cross.

The Son obeyed the Father's will and offered up His life as a ransom for ours. He suffered our punishment on the tree of the cross. He endured the wrath of the Lord God that was meant for us. By this, He freed us from both the bondage that the Law held us under for our sins and trespasses, and also freed us from the bonds of death, which held us ransom by its claim to our souls on account of our iniquities and sins. He suffered the death that we deserved. And then on the third day He rose again from the dead, and opened up all the graves of those who cling to Him in faith.

And it is here where the work of the Holy Ghost, the Third Person of the Holy Trinity, begins. For it is the Holy Ghost Who works through means to create and sustain faith and life in us. Our Lord + Jesus in the Gospel reading from the Apostle and Evangelist St. John is met at night by a Pharisee named Nicodemus. Our Lord explains to this teacher of the Law that in order to be saved, in order to see and enter the Kingdom of God, in order to receive eternal life, one must be born anew. We are

born anew through the washing of regeneration and the renewal of the Holy Ghost given to us in the waters of Holy Baptism. In the waters of Holy Baptism, we are buried with the Christ. We are buried with the One Who was sent by the heavenly Father to be lifted up on the tree of the holy cross just as Moses the Prophet lifted up the serpent in the wilderness. Through Holy Baptism we are connected to the event that won our salvation. And in Holy Baptism the rewards that our Lord + Jesus won for us by appeasing the wrath of the heavenly Father are bestowed upon us by the Holy Ghost.

The Holy Ghost was sent by the Father and the Son into this world to preserve and sustain the holy Christian Church until the Last Day when the Son would return and judge both the quick and the dead, and bring all those who believe on His Name into the eternal heavenly realms, where we will once again be restored as children of the heavenly Father. Through Holy Baptism we have a foretaste of that eternal union. All sins and trespasses in us have been drowned and killed. We have arisen from the waters of Holy Baptism as a new creation. We have been born anew. Indeed, through all the means of grace the Holy Ghost is creating and renewing us poor, miserable sinners.

We were drawn into the fellowship of the holy Christian and Apostolic Church while we were yet dead in our sins and trespasses. Many of us were brought to the font of grace as an infant, still too young to voice our approval or disapproval. But the Holy Ghost still worked through this wonderful means of grace, because the Word of God connected to the water of Holy Baptism is powerful to make alive and give birth anew. We have been spiritually born anew by the working of the Holy Ghost in the waters of Holy Baptism. Our Triune Lord God did this through His holy and precious Word connected with the waters of Holy Baptism. We did not need to enter into our mother's womb a second time to be born anew.

Indeed, my dearly beloved, we were born anew because through the preaching and administering of the Word of God through the means of grace, we have entered into the womb of Mother Church. She has born us again out of water and the spirit. This was solely the work of our Triune Lord God, and we had no hand in it, other than to say after He had restored us to life again, "Amen."

Therefore, my dearly beloved, let us rejoice this feast day that our Triune Lord God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, has brought us to life again. We who were dead in our sins and trespasses have been born anew by the secret counsel of the Triune Lord God. Just as we had no hand in planning our earthly birth in the flesh, we had no hand in planning our heavenly birth in the spirit. For He Who was Spirit became flesh for us by the will of the heavenly Father, and has sent to us His Spirit to be our Comforter and Guide until He returns again on the Last Day to take us to live with Him in our eternal home which He has prepared beforehand for us who have been redeemed by the implanting of faith by the working of the Holy Ghost. Thanks be to the Triune Lord God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, for our creation, redemption, and sanctification. Amen. In the Name of our Lord + Jesus, the Christ. Amen.

Prayer in Pulpit after Sermon:

Almighty God, be pleased to accompany Thy Word with Thy Holy Spirit and grant that Thy Word would increase faith in us; bring into the Way of Truth all such as have erred; turn the hearts of the unrepentant; and for sake of Thy Name grant succor to all heavy hearts and those who are heavy-laden, that they may through the mercy of the Lord Jesus Christ be relieved and preserved so that they succumb not to the temptation of despair but rather that they gain the victory over the world, the flesh, and the devil; through the same Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, Who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever One God, 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!