

Sunday, June 12, 2022

Grace and Peace be to you from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen

So here we are – Trinity Sunday. And our focus today is obviously the Triune God – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

All of us who have gone through catechetical instruction might remember the lessons on the Trinity were, perhaps, the most confusing. How can God be three and three in one? It is one of the most baffling doctrines in all of Christendom.

Some folks believe there is just too much mystery, too much to try and fit together in a tight, neat package that is easily explained. And to a large degree that is true.

So then today, I've decided the very best way to approach Trinity Sunday is by taking a look at the Athanasian Creed which is found in the LBW but not in ELW.

So please take out the insert in your bulletin. The Athanasian Creed is the third and largest of the three creeds. It is not named after its author, but after Athanasius, who was instrumental in writing the Nicene Creed in 325 AD. It was likely written in the 6<sup>th</sup> or 7<sup>th</sup> century. Luther thought this creed was the grandest production of the Church since the time of the apostles.

I suspect right about now some of you are saying to yourselves that you wish you would have stayed home today. How boring this is going to be? How could Pr. Tanner do this to us?

Well relax. Put the Athanasian Creed aside for now. Please take it home with you in case you want to read it later.

Instead of painstakingly moving through each line of the Athanasian Creed today I would rather that we focus on the idea, the notion that the Trinity is a doctrine, a reality that might best be described as a relationship.

We might think about the Trinity – three in one, and one in three – as three faces of God, or three masks of God, or three expressions of God. But no matter how we tend to describe the Trinity, we are talking about a relationship of and between Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

This emphasis comes to us, I believe, very loudly and clearly in our gospel text today. Please listen for relationship as we hear Jesus say, "When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth; for he will not speak on his own, but will speak whatever he hears, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. He will glorify me because he will take what is mine and declare it to you. All that the Father has is mine. For this reason, I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you."

Relationships. We all have numerous relationships with others, don't we? We relate to so many people regularly that it is likely that we take those relationships for granted or at least don't think twice about them. They happen naturally. They make up a great portion of our lives. And

they are important to us. They provide a certain familiarity to our lives. We enjoy these relationships. And we enjoy the variety of relationships of which we are a part.

We are in a relationship with our family – perhaps several relationships with family given the complexities of families these days.

We are in a relationship with our church family that ideally is a relationship of mutual respect and a joy in serving God together as part of a congregation.

We are in a relationship with those with whom we work.

We are in a relationship with others as we volunteer, as we are involved with outside interests too numerous to mention. We enjoy serving with others who have the same goal, the same interest as we have.

And in today's society we have many opportunities to be involved in online, social media relationships of all sorts. And these relationships may take up a great amount of our time and energy. Sometimes, these relationships create problems with our other offline relationships.

The list goes on and on, yet we most definitely are part of numerous relationships that we navigate usually without too much thinking or too many problems.

And as we continue to look at the relationships in which we find ourselves we are likely to quickly acknowledge that the most important relationships we enjoy are those that we place under the category of intimate relationships.

Intimate relationships of all kinds most generally center around parents, children, spouses, friends, companions, and significant others. These relationships are with those who are dearest to us.

Again, the definition of an intimate relationship encapsules many of the closest relationships we enjoy. And there are many different ways of expressing intimacy beyond the narrow definition that involves sexuality.

Now, back to the Trinity. As we read the New Testament, we find that Jesus had an intimate relationship with the God he called Abba, Father.

And as time passed, we find that Christians began to say that Jesus was the most profound way we had of knowing God. Jesus is still intimately among us, made present through the Holy Spirit.

Theologians make an even more radical point – within the Godhead there is intimacy – therefore, the Trinity visualized as three interlocking circles. The very nature of God is communion, intimacy, and mutuality.

In the final chapters of John's gospel, we find numerous references to an intimate relationship between Jesus and his Father, and the sending of the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, to be with us forever.

Over time we learn and respect the fact that intimacy is not simply a human trait; it is the very nature of God. The divine is not distant or removed from human life. Jesus is the very intimacy of God made human and living among us. While at the same time there is always more. There is always more to learn of a person. Such it is with the mystery of God – Father, Son, and Holy spirit.

Even as we proclaim a gospel declaring the nearness of God, may each day be a time to leave room for the God beyond our comprehension as well.

Trinity Sunday comes but once each year following Pentecost. I suspect most pastors and laity are happy that we get to tackle this doctrine of the church only once each year.

Whenever we focus on the Trinity – three in one God and one God in three – we might get hung up fairly quickly. Yet the Trinity is not a formula we have to force ourselves to affirm. Rather, it is a joyful witness that the dance of unity and diversity, of communication and relationship, is deep in creation's DNA – in fact, deeper than the creation itself.

Thanks be to God. Amen