

Sermon – Trinity Sunday
Matthew 28:16-20
June 11, 2017

“Father, Son, Holy Spirit – and You”

It really shouldn't be this easy for me - illustration wise that is. This is Trinity Sunday – when we preachers strain for ways to describe the mystery of God existing eternally as three persons, each “*person*” fully God yet each distinct in such a way as they deserve to be named and worshipped. However, Trinity Sunday is not a math or English grammar lesson where we try to make the numbers add up or the adjectives for God apropos. Trinity Sunday is about three divine persons, (proper nouns for you grammar gremlins) – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit and the *one* person these three equally, fully and eternally love – you. Trinity Sunday is no less about the relationship that exists uniquely between God and...little ol you.

How does one even attempt to explain three in one, simultaneous unity and distinctiveness in 12 minutes? This year I caught a break – it shouldn't be this convenient to stumble upon an analogy, but I did. Today you all know me as Pastor Ken Nelson, your friendly neighborhood preacher, communicator of the good news of Jesus Christ in word and sacrament, invited guest at your hospital bedsides and invocation specialist at all congregational meetings of this church. Today, plain as the nose on your face I am here to carry out the one role you alone can and have bestowed on me – pastor.

But wonder of wonders next Sunday is also Father's day, when three lucky young ladies have the distinct pleasure of pampering me with all manner of kindnesses and considerations and maybe a gushy card and bottle of smell-um (that's what my girls call the latest cologne they buy me) or a neat accessory for my golf bag. In person or via facetime I will stand before them – plain as the nose on their faces in the one role they alone can and have bestowed on me – father.

But wait, it gets even better! This coming Thursday is also my wedding anniversary –32 hap, hap, happy years am I into my marriage to Marcella, three kids, a dozen different addresses, about the same number of different jobs between the two of us, partners in household maintenance, parent-teacher conferences and now some post-graduate career counseling along with occasional summer evening walks, and I (will) join her at some nice restaurant - plain as the nose on her lovely face in the one role she alone can and has bestowed on me – husband.

Can you beat that – Ken Nelson – Pastor, Father, and Husband, same time, same place, same person - many things all at once? But even now I can see some of you rolling your eyes and sighing! *‘Now hold on just a “cotton pickin” minute Pastor Ken, aren't are just rolling out again that ancient heresy of “Modalism”, confessed by such teachers as Sebelius that states that God is not three distinct persons but that he merely reveals himself in three different forms, a teaching moreover that was condemned by Canon One of the First Council of Constantinople in 381 AD, and that those who confess such cannot rightly be considered part of the church catholic?!’* Guess I can't pull the wool over your Orthodox Lutheran eyes can I?

OK, OK, in truth I don't have an airtight, leak-proof analogy for the Trinity, other than to say that it cannot be comprehended by human reason but only confessed by faith. We worship one God in Trinity and Trinity in unity, neither confusing the person or dividing the substance and confessing that each is equal in glory and co-equal in majesty - or something like that! Enough said. Analogies break down sooner or later. Martin Luther once said *"To try to deny the Trinity endangers your salvation, but to try to comprehend the Trinity endangers your sanity."*

Let's try it another way then, and instead of focusing on God, let's focus on you. Jesus said *"go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit; and teaching them to obey all that I have commanded you. And lo I am with you always, to the end of the age."* The point of this commissioning is this - God does things for you, but in turn God expects things from you - just like God the Father did of Jesus the Son. You call upon God because God has bestowed a unique name on you through your baptism - Christian. But if you are called Christian, you are also called Disciple, and if Disciple then also Servant. You, all at the same time - all three - and like the first followers of Jesus you're tempted to say *"Who, Me?"* (Where after all do you think the "doubt" in this story came from - the disciples weren't scratching their heads over a doctrine of the Trinity, I can tell you that much!)

Unfortunately, most of us re-discover this three-fold naming and commissioning act of God like the person who decides to take up tennis - if you can bear another analogy. They study up on the sport, reading as many books on it as they can, all of which advise them to *"stick to the fundamentals"*, *"think positively"* and *"develop a winning attitude."* Then when a friend asks how the tennis is actually going, with a positive, winning attitude in their voice, they say *"When my opponent hits the ball to me, my brain immediately barks out a command to my body: 'Race up to the net, square up to the ball, and slam a blistering shot low and to a far corner of the court. Then immediately jump back into position and be prepared in case you need to return the next volley to the other far corner of the court.'* But then my body says, *'Who, me?'"*

Well yes, you - because you dear people, each of you are three in one - Christian, Disciple, and Servant of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. That's the part of the divine relationship that matters today - you. Recall what Genesis 1 says about you...*"In the image of God he created them...male and female he created them."* Ponder what the writer of Psalm 8 wondered one starry night - *"What is mankind that you are mindful of them, human beings that you care for them...yet you have crowned them with glory and honor, you have made them rulers over the works of your hands?"* Who...you? Yes, you. And that's a mystery you're going to have to discover the meaning of for yourself. But remember, the other three in whose image you are made have promised to never leave you as you do. AMEN

