



Pastor Ken Nelson's Sermon

**SERMON – SUNDAY OF THE HOLY TRINITY
MATTHEW 28:16-20
JUNE 3, 2023
“DO YOU INTEND TO CONTINUE?”**

So many sermons – so little time! That’s a feeling that’s been racing through me of late. Festivals of this sort do little to quell that feeling – it’s Trinity Sunday, when the annual task of preachers is to contemplate, ponder, maybe illustrate but for heaven’s sake avoid at all costs trying to explain how God is three persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

A creed of the church will have to suffice for our purposes. It is in truth “the” creed that’s supposed to be confessed on this day and this day only - the Athanasian Creed, and it says *“whoever wants to be saved should above all cling to the catholic faith...now this is the catholic faith – we worship one God in trinity and the Trinity in unity, neither confusing the persons nor dividing the divine being. For the Father is one person, the Son is another, and the Spirit is still another...but the deity of the Father, Son and Spirit is one, equal in glory, coeternal in majesty. What the father is, the Son is, and so is the Spirit... And it goes on and on...and on from there!*

If you’d like to take a peek, it’s on page 54-55 of your LBW. But this is also the weekend we witness Kyle, Ellie, Will and Addie affirm their faith in this God. So many sermons...so little time. My remarks tomorrow will be oriented toward them and what affirmation of baptism means. What it clearly does not mean is that their baptisms kick in today – their baptisms have been humming along since in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit they (like you) were made children of God and workers with other believers in His kingdom.

If anything, affirmation of baptism means they (like you) are now pledging to get to work. When Jesus was baptized, a voice from heaven said, *“this is my son, with whom I am well pleased.”* According to Matthew chapter 4, after his baptism Jesus was led by the Holy Spirit into the wilderness...you might say...to get to work, or at the very least learn about the conditions in which God’s kingdom would come – amidst opposition of every sort. In the wilderness, Jesus was tempted by the devil. Matthew says the final temptation was the worst. In it, Satan offered Jesus authority – follow me the tempter said...and I will give you...everything. Your little heart will lack...nothing! I won’t just fill your belly...I will swell your pride!

Jesus resisted by invoking the Bible (a darn good reason if there ever was one for Bible memorization) - Deuteronomy 6:16 to be precise, reminding Satan of the command to *“worship the Lord your God and serve Him only.”* For Jesus to have accepted what Satan had offered would have been to live by a lie of course – Satan has no such authority – he was bluffing, and then as now has little if any interest in satisfying us, much less make us happy or good.

In our lesson today from Matthew 28, Matthew circles back skillfully to that moment in the wilderness, but this time the resurrected Jesus sets the record straight – ALL authority in heaven and on earth has been given to him. Jesus’ “authority” however, directs those who submit to it outside of themselves, to the service of others. Yet in doing so, in insisting that our well-being is tied up in the wellbeing of this world, Jesus does not wipe away our individuality – our “personhood” – Jesus does not as some critics claim, smother a person –he enriches a person.

I hope all of you (and not just our young Kyle, Ellie, Addie and Will) affirm that.

I understand why people seriously question whether Jesus has any authority at all in this world. It puzzles folks, even Christians, when they hear that and see how bad the world has become. But that is not what Jesus is saying, or what he means when he says *“all authority on heaven and earth has been given to me...”* The claim he is making is not that the world from the moment he spoke to his disciples in Galilee was going to turn on a dime and be a law abiding, kind, respectful, selfless, charitable place.

The claim he is making in his *“Great Commission”* is that with all authority in heaven and earth belonging to Him as resurrected Savior and Lord, Jesus was going to begin the work of making the world what His Father through the power of Holy Spirit intended it to be. It meant Jesus was in the very earliest days of working to take the world from where it was – with its lawlessness, harshness, disrespectfulness, vanity, and greed, and bring it under his authority.

And how was this going to happen? Here’s the shocker – through his followers, though those who affirm by faith that Jesus is their Lord, their forgiver, their forever friend. Imagine that – God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit – one God in three persons...plus one more - you! But if you have ever prayed...or again intend to pray the prayer our Lord taught us, that is precisely what you have to believe. If you pray *“thy kingdom come”* don’t be surprised to learn that God will come, and when He does, call upon you to help bring that about.

Luther said in his Small Catechism *God’s kingdom comes indeed without our prayer, but we ask in this prayer that it may come also to us.* He then added, *God’s kingdom comes when our heavenly Father gives us His Holy Spirit, so that by grace we believe his word, and (in the name of Jesus) live godly lives.* This is most certainly true – is it not?

In the Lutheran service of affirmation of baptism, there are lots of words – confession of faith in the Triune God being the most important. Not far on its heels are these...*do you intend to continue...* That’s the question isn’t it – the one we all have to answer. Do you intend to continue in the covenant God made with you in baptism. That’s where the rubber of faith hits the road of life. Tomorrow, our catechumens will be cued to say *“I do, and I ask God to help and guide me.”* What say you?

AMEN