

Sermon for May 22 2005

Truth of the Trinity

John 16:12-16

This is Trinity Sunday. I want to suggest that this is one of the most important Sundays in the Christian year because the Trinity is the core doctrine of the Christian faith. Why is this so? It is because when we think about the Trinity we are concentrating on the nature and character of God. Everything we believe about the world and our place in the world flows out of our understanding of the Trinity.

However we have a tendency to bypass serious consideration of this subject because we perhaps have concluded that the doctrine of the Trinity is some theological formula that should be stored in the lumber room of the mind. It may be useful some day so we will keep it at hand, but it is not intended for the practicalities of day to day living.

And yet nothing can be further from the truth. For there is nothing more important to the Christian than the truth about the Trinity.

The God we worship is three persons and the three persons are one God.

Yes it is mystery. We cannot fully understand what it means to say that God is three persons and the three persons are one God. We are to confess a mystery of this kind. We can't explain it entirely but there is much we can understand and this we have to hold fast.

In summary we read in the New Testament that the Trinity, the Father the Son and the Holy Spirit are the divine team, united in a plan to save our souls. What can be more important than that? That is why the theologians say that the doctrine of the Trinity is so important. If God were not three persons in one God than the plan of salvation could not operate.

This is the way the New Testament presents the Trinity. You may hear some who say that the New Testament says nothing about the doctrine of the Trinity. But think about it. Don't you find passages throughout the New Testament linking together the work of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit?

Look for instance at Galatians 4.4 and 5:

When the fullness of time had come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law,⁵ in order to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as children.

Jesus is eternally the Son of God. The remarkable thing the New Testament teaches is that through Jesus' coming, we become God's heirs by adoption, part of his family. As his sons and daughters, God the Father sends to us his Holy Spirit. At verse 6 Paul says:

⁶ And because you are children, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!"

Notice what is said here. It is because we are God's children that he sends into our hearts the Spirit of Jesus. Now remember that our heart is the core of who we are. It is the very essence of our being.. And it is into the very core of our being that the very Essence of God's is imparted, so that we can cry Abba Father.

When we cry this cry, it implies that we desire to live in such a way, and are empowered to do so, in order for us to show that we are kingdom kids. We want to please our daddy because we are his children. Because we have the Spirit of His Son dwelling in our hearts we will show by our own lives traits that identify us as his sons and daughters.

In First Peter notice how he refers to the Trinity in his opening greeting:

Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To the exiles of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, ² who have been chosen and destined by God the Father and sanctified by the Spirit to be obedient to Jesus Christ and to be sprinkled with his blood: May grace and peace be yours in abundance.

Here is the plan of salvation in a nutshell. God the Father has destined us for salvation. We are sanctified by the Spirit and sprinkled with the blood of Jesus. Therefore we rejoice in that we are being pardoned and saved by God and so we obey him as long as life shall last.

Here are just two of many passages that show us that the trinitarian understanding of God is found throughout the New Testament.

Now let us turn to the passage at hand. John 16:12-16

¹² "I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. ¹³ 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. ¹⁴ He will glorify me, because he will take what is mine and declare it to you. ¹⁵ All that the Father has is mine. For this reason I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you.

I want to underline what it is said about three distinct persons in these verses:

1. Person and Work of Spirit
2. What Jesus says about himself
3. What this then says about the person and work of the believer.

1) The person and work of the Spirit:

Notice first off at verse 14 Jesus says “He will glorify me.” This is a personal pronoun. Jesus refers to the Holy Spirit as “He” is a personal pronoun. The Holy Spirit is not an “it” The Spirit of God is a person fulfilling a personal ministry:

Jesus speaks of the Holy Spirit’s ministry in this passage as one that

- Convinces
- Glorifies
- Guide believers
- Speak what he hears
- Declare things that all God’s children need to know

The Holy Spirit doesn’t call attention to himself. From Pentecost onward he has been glorifying Jesus by taking truth and reality of Jesus and declaring it to the world.

Think of a flood light. It is placed in a niche in a wall. You are not intended to look at the flood light. If you did it would blind you. No, the light is trained on the building to illuminate it. As you stand in front of building you see more of its beauty than you would in broad daylight. The details stand out more.

The Holy Spirit fulfills a flood light ministry in relation to the Lord Jesus

The Spirit shows the glory and beauty of the Lord Jesus Christ. He does this in two ways and so we can say that the work of the Holy Spirit is doubled barreled.

In the first place he sets before people truth and reality of Jesus as Jesus truly is. We see this in the New Testament. The New Testament as we have it today could only be composed because the Spirit revealed to the writers of the Gospels and the Letters all that needed to be said about the person, teaching and work of Jesus Christ. These writings are the primary means by which the Holy Spirit shows us all that is true concerning the Lord Jesus. He gave the Scriptures and so glorifies Jesus.

But he has to do something more. Yes he makes known the glory of the Saviour but he also has to open blind eyes and unstop deaf ears.

Think again of the floodlight. The light may be able to highlight the building in such a way so as to display its beauty in great detail. But if you are blind you will see nothing of this beauty. A blind person can only see if their eyes are opened.

The Holy Spirit does this also. He opens hard hearts and blind eyes and unstops deaf ears thus enabling us to discern what is there.

I trust I am speaking to people who know something of this ministry. Or if you do not know this, I pray that you will ask the Lord the Holy Spirit to open your eyes so that you may see the glory of Jesus.

Many of us could say that at one time Jesus didn't mean anything to us and then our eyes were opened and our ears were unstopped. Then we began to see that this message is for me and that the Lord Jesus is real and invited me.

In order for people to see Jesus for who he is the Spirit needs to open blind eyes.

We see this displayed clearly in the Acts of the Apostles in the ninth chapter. There we read of the Apostle Paul on the road to Damascus. After his encounter with the risen Lord Jesus Christ we are told that "For three days he was without sight, and neither ate nor drank." This physical blindness was a parable for Paul of what had been his spiritual blindness. Before his encounter with Jesus he had not seen him rightly. But after looking head on into the flood light so to speak, he would not only regain his physical sight but would then have the spiritual sight to see Jesus clearly and then be used by the Lord to help others see him for who he is.

When you think of Ministry of the Holy Spirit think of this first.

Taking what is His and bringing it home to us as the reality by which we are to live.

2) Secondly, notice what is said about Jesus Christ himself

About his person, he is the Son of God. John underlines and highlights this making it the central truth so that nobody can miss it. In the first chapter of the Gospel he wrote we read:

¹⁴ And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth.

Jesus is on a par with Father All that the Father has is mine. There is nothing in the Father's nature and power that is not mine says Jesus. Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. .

The Spirit will glorify me because he will show you the work I have done for men and women's salvation.

Yes, the Eternal son became man to die for our sins and having done so he rose and has ascended and is at the Father's right hand sharing the Father's dominion. This is part of Jesus' glory. This is his exaltation. We are given a picture of this exaltation in Revelation chapter 1:

² Then I turned to see whose voice it was that spoke to me, and on turning I saw seven golden lampstands, ¹³ and in the midst of the lampstands I saw one like the Son of Man, clothed with a long robe and with a golden sash across his chest. ¹⁴ His head and his hair were white as white wool, white as snow; his eyes were like a flame of fire, ¹⁵ his feet were like burnished bronze, refined as in a furnace, and his voice was like the sound of many waters. ¹⁶ In his right hand he held seven stars, and from his mouth came a sharp, two-edged sword, and his face was like the sun shining with full force.

This is a picture of who Jesus is now. The glorified and exalted one, holy is he.

The word glory always refers to something magnificent something awesome and marvelous. It is the word that regularly refers to God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

The Hebrew word carries with it the idea of something that is very heavy, something that is weighty. The glory of Jesus is His greatness and praise worthiness. We realize when the Holy Spirit opens our eyes that Jesus is worthy of our worship.

We give him glory because this has been shown to us. We know the praise worthiness and Jesus and praise the saviour all the day long because of who he is.

Jesus says "The Spirit will glorify me and will prompt you to worship me because I am the one who has always loved you as the one who has always loved you loved you, saved you and fills your horizon with my presence."

Jesus is our supremely important friend, supremely important guide, supremely important focus of our life

3) *The Person and Privilege of Christian believer*

We began as a sinner whose eyes were closed to divine things and ears were deaf to word of God. The Holy Spirit Spirit has given sight and unstopped deaf ears and so that the Christian believer has come to discern and appreciate the person of the Lord Jesus and follow him as saviour, master and friend.

The Christian appreciates the love of the Father who gave the Lord Jesus.

And so the Christian believer is the person whose whole horizon is filled with the glory of the Lord Jesus. There is a lovely example of this in Acts 16:13 where we read:

On the sabbath day we went outside the gate by the river, where we supposed there was a place of prayer; and we sat down and spoke to the women who had gathered there. ¹⁴ A certain woman named Lydia, a worshiper of God, was listening to us; she was from the city of Thyatira and a dealer in purple cloth. The Lord opened her heart to listen eagerly to what was said by Paul. ¹⁵ When she and her household were baptized, she urged us, saying, "If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come and stay at my home." And she prevailed upon us.

This is how it always is when the Holy Spirit moves in our hearts to show us the truth of the saviour. Lydia was a woman who had her heart opened to the word of the Lord and so she listened eagerly to what they were saying and responded by becoming a Christian.

Now that is what the doctrine of the Trinity is all about. Never again treat it as something trivial.

In 1904 there was movement of HS in Wales. The leader of these meetings said always honour the Holy Spirit.

- We must learn to do this
- When we gather to worship
- Hear the bible read or read it on our own
- When we sing about and to the savior
- In our hearts we are to pray that the Holy Spirit will show us more of the glory of Jesus. With that we are to learn to honour the Lord praising him in our heart from our hearts Praising our saviour all the day long.
- Learn to honour the Lord Himself/ the glorious Lord so that we may be found praising him in my heart from my heart.

- Honouring the Father who sent his Son who has now sent the Spirit so that this reality may be ours.