

## The Power of Three Mathew 28: 16-20

One of the things that makes the Christian faith distinct from every other religion of the world is our belief in the Triune God. The God we worship is one, yet there are three who are distinctly God, One God, revealed in three persons. The whole concept is impossible to fully grasp. Just as we struggle to understand how God alone created everything from nothing, and how God has always existed, the mystery of the Trinity also begs to be solved. Even so, our limited ability to understand the divine must not become a stumbling block to growing in our faith.

The writer of the Book of Hebrews reminds us that it is by faith we believe the universe was created by the word of God. Genesis, the first book of the Bible, does give us some clues as to how it happened, but God in his grace has not seen fit to reveal every detail. Faith rather than knowledge is the governing factor. God is eternal, as Jesus gave these words to the writer of the Book of Revelation in 1:8. I am the Alpha and the Omega, says the Lord God, who is and was and who is to come, the Almighty. A less than perfect human understanding of who Jesus is does not change the fact that Jesus is the Great I am, God almighty. I yearn for the day when we can resume singing the Gloria Patri and the Doxology, powerful statements of belief set to music.

The human mind, no matter how learned and intelligent, is not capable of completely and fully understanding the nature of God. That will not change until our human insight and feeble wits are fully restored to perfection for us in heaven. Someday, we will have a perfect understanding of who God is. In the meantime, we must rely upon faith and the Scriptures to help us know and love God, the One who created us and placed us upon this earth. We may not know everything about God, but we can know enough to lead us to saving faith.

Faith and the Scriptures. Faith in the Scriptures. Both are critical, as they will influence and determine how we worship, how we pray, and ultimately how we live our lives. For example, are we to worship God the Father, Jesus the Son or the third person of the Holy Spirit depending upon the occasion? Or when we pray, do we direct our petitions and prayers of thanksgiving to God the Father or to His Son Jesus Christ or His Holy Spirit?

And how do the saints and the Virgin Mary fit into the picture? These are complex questions without simple answers, and like other difficult questions in life they must not prevent us from seeking the truth. Let us begin with what we can know about God and the Trinity.

Many analogies have been used to attempt to describe the Trinity. Some use an egg, where you have the yolk, the egg white and the shell. But it is possible to separate the three, so ultimately it is insufficient. Others use a triangle or three interlocking rings, or water in its three possible forms of ice, liquid and steam. All ultimately fall short along the way. Earthly things and mere human words are woefully inadequate to define a Holy God. We must look elsewhere.

From beginning to end, the Scriptures reveal two very fundamental truths. There is but one true God and God's people are to worship no one else but Him. The very first of the Ten Commandments God gave to His people through the prophet Moses is one example. Exod 20:2-3: I am the Lord your God and you shall have no other gods before me. Deut 6:4-Hear o Israel, the Lord is our God, the Lord alone; and Deut, 32:39- "see now that I am he; there is no god besides me. There is ample evidence for the oneness of God in the Old Testament, but what about the New? The answer lies in both. God was, is and ever shall be and does not change throughout Eternity. The God of the Old Testament is the exact same God of the New. 1 Corinthians 8:4-6 (among other places) affirms that truth. **Old Testament or New, God desires us to make Him the center of our lives and God desires us to make Him the center of our worship.**

When someone or something other than the God of the Scriptures takes first place in our lives, we are guilty of idolatry and breaking the first and second commandment and possibly several others. It is an especially deadly sin as it leads to a host of other sins. Unfortunately, identifying idolatry is not as simple as seeing someone bowing to a golden calf or kneeling for a political cause. Empirical evidence suggests idolatry may be the most prevalent sin of our society today. Perhaps that will be a topic for another Sunday.

The question for this Sunday is how did we get from Yahweh, Elohim and Jehovah in the OT, the God of one, to the triune God of the new? How did the church fathers arrive at the conclusion that God is both Three and One?

Those that question will remind us that the word “trinity” is not found in the Scriptures. That is true, but there are several places in the Bible where a clear reference to a triune God may be found. Our Scripture reading this morning- the great commission- is one of the best examples. Note that the word name is singular, not plural. The benediction found in 2 Cor. 13:14 that we are so familiar with is another.

The entire Gospel of John affirms the Trinity especially where John quotes these words of Jesus: “I and the Father are one”. “He who has seen me has seen the Father”. “The Holy Spirit is given by the Father, sent from the Father, and proceeds from the Father. The Father sends the Spirit in the Son’s name. The Son will send the Spirit from the Father. And then the Son must go away (return to the Father) so that He can send the Spirit. There can be no doubt the three are mysteriously, intricately, and inseparably linked.

Someday all will acknowledge that Jesus is Lord, Phil. 2:10-11. At the name of Jesus every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth and under the earth and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord. In the meantime, we are to remain faithful in delivering our message of hope and salvation through Jesus Christ. I leave you this morning with a warning found in Hebrews 3:12. Take care brothers and sisters that none of you may have an evil unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God. The Living God is the Trine God, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

There is power in three! And just as the Trinity is inseparable, God desires us to be inseparable. As we learned last week, there is power when we are One in the name of Jesus. When we couple that with the promise Jesus made to His followers- that He is with us always, even to the end of the age, we will have what we need to go and be for the world the body of Christ. But only if we are willing and obedient. My prayer is that we will. Amen