

THE FESTIVAL OF THE HOLY TRINITY June 7, 10 & 11, 2006
St. Mark's Evangelical Lutheran Church – Watertown, WI

WE ARE DISCIPLES OF THE TRIUNE GOD Matthew 28:18-20

When someone asks you, “Who are you?” what is your first response to that question? Do you respond with your name? Do you respond with your occupation? Do you say, “I am an American” indicating your citizenship? How many of us would answer that question by saying, “I am a Christian” or “I am a disciple of Jesus Christ or of the Triune God”? So often we think of ourselves by the name that has been given to us at our birth or the occupation we have chosen or the nation of our birth.

Today as we celebrate the last festival in the festival half the Christian church year, the Festival of the Holy Trinity, we focus our thoughts not on an event in the life of Jesus Christ, but on a central and basic teaching of our Christian faith. It is the teaching of the Holy Trinity, the teaching regarding the God that we worship. The words before us were spoken by our Savior Jesus just before he ascended into heaven. They are the words of the Great Commission. As we consider Jesus' command to us I would like you to consider this fact – **WE ARE DISCIPLES OF THE TRIUNE GOD. I) He Is A God Who Is Beyond Our Understanding. II) He Has Given Us An Awesome And Exciting Assignment.**

HE IS A GOD WHO IS BEYOND OUR UNDERSTANDING

What is the God that you and I worship like? He is a God that we cannot totally comprehend nor explain. As he says to us through the pen of the prophet Isaiah, “For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways declares the LORD. As the heavens are higher than the earth so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.” (Isaiah 55:8-9) When we try and probe what God is like, it is mind boggling. Jesus tells us something about God in his words to us today. When he gives us the commission to make disciples he tells us how. He says that we are to baptize, that is wash people with water, in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.” Jesus lists three persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Yet he says this is the name of God. He does not say names, but name. As Moses wrote, “Hear, O Israel, the LORD, our God, the LORD is one.” (Deuteronomy 6:4) The God we worship is one entity, one being. Yet he is three separate and distinct persons. As God said at the time of creation of the human race, “Let us make man in our image, in our likeness.” (Genesis 1:26) Now does that make sense? First we are told that God is one, then we hear God say, “let us”. It doesn't make sense to our human reason, but that is how God has revealed himself to us in his word, the Bible. Every time I teach or study the doctrine of the Trinity I am convinced that the Bible is not the work of men, because if it were, the God of the Bible would make sense to human reason. So God reveals himself to us as one being and yet three separate and distinct persons. The word that the early Christian church coined to describe God is triune or trinity – three in one. This word is not in the Bible, but the concept of three in one is definitely taught throughout the Old and New Testaments.

Jesus' words also reveal other characteristics about our God. Jesus said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.” (v. 18) Isn't it comforting to know that our God possesses all power and authority? He rules this world. He rules the universe. Everything is in his control. You and I have no reason to fear anything that happens because our almighty God is in control and he has told us that he will cause everything to work together for good to those who love him who have been called according to his purpose.

Not only is our God almighty, he is also present everywhere. When Jesus concludes his command to us, he gives us this promise, “And surely I am with you always to the very end of the age.” (v. 20b) How often don't you and I feel all alone? We feel that everyone has forgotten or forsaken us. The truth is we are never alone. The Triune God is always with us. When you have your living and all powerful Savior by your side every moment of your life, there is no reason to fear or worry.

Isn't our God awesome? He is personal. He is a being. He's not some force or immaterial object. He took on human flesh and blood and became one of us. He personally lived a holy and perfect life for each of us. He then gave his life on the cross for the human race. God died for you and me and for all people. The Son of God still has his human body and we will see him again in the flesh, when we are taken from this world to glory and on the last day when he appears in the clouds of the sky with all his holy angels to usher in the end of this world as we know it. Did the Father and the Holy Spirit take on a human body? No. Just the Son of God took on human flesh and blood. Again this is a mystery that we do not comprehend. Yet Jesus told his followers, "Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. Don't you believe that I am in the Father and that the Father is in me?" (John 14:9b, 10a)

I do not understand the Trinity. It makes no sense to my reason. However, I believe that God is one and that he has revealed himself as three separate and distinct persons. That is how God has made himself known in his Word, the Bible. We can take great comfort in this teaching for we have a God who knows us personally, who is almighty and able to help in all our needs; who is present with us and knows everything that you and I are going through. What an awesome and wonderful God we worship.

HE HAS GIVEN US AN AWESOME AND EXCITING ASSIGNMENT

As followers of the triune God we have been given an assignment. This is an awesome and exciting assignment. Jesus says to us, "As you are going 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 everything I have commanded you." (Matthew 28:19-20a)

The assignment that the Holy Trinity has given to each of us his personal followers and disciples is to make more disciples. We have the privilege and joy of helping to add more people to the family of God and to the citizenship of heaven. That seems like an awesome responsibility. When you are given an assignment to do be it at work, at school or on some committee that you volunteer for, you need to carefully consider – what is expected of me – what tools do I need to carry this out – and how am I going to do this.

Jesus makes the assignment very clear. It's simple. Make disciples. Make people into followers of the triune God.

What tools do you and I need to carry out this assignment? When you build a house, you know that you are going to need lumber, hammer, nails, saws, level and other various tools to put this house together. What tools do we need to make disciples? We need water and God's Word.

How do we use the tools that God supplies to us? Jesus said wash people in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. We take water and apply it to people in the name of the triune God. And God does the rest. He gives faith. He gives the gift of the Holy Spirit. He forgives and pardons a person's sins because of what Jesus Christ has done for all people by life, death and resurrection. Then Jesus says to us "and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you." We continue to teach and proclaim the Word of God. We tell people what the Bible says. We don't argue about it. We proclaim it. And God does the rest. Through the proclaiming of that Word that you and I hear, God the Holy Spirit causes that faith that we have been given in our baptism to continue to grow and become stronger. The Holy Spirit through that Word fills your heart and mine with peace and confidence. We have the peace of knowing that we are in a right relationship with our God and that relationship has been restored and strengthened not by our doing but by the work of our Savior Jesus. It is often hard to believe when Jesus says, "Cheer up! Your sins are forgiven." (Matthew 9:2) We think, "Yah, sure. But I have to do something." No you don't have to do anything. The triune God has done it all for you. We also can live our lives in confidence. Why? Because the triune God is in charge and he assures us that everything that happens always has a reason and purpose and will always work for our own personal good and for the good of his Holy Christian Church.

Isn't it great to have an assignment where you are not going to be graded on the outcome? In fact, the outcome does not depend on us. That depends on God. We just have the opportunity and the joy of being the Trinity's instruments. We are his witnesses. We are his mouth piece to proclaim the wonders of God and he does all the rest.

Who are we? We are disciples of the Triune God. We are on a mission to proclaim the love of God to all people, making disciples by baptizing them in the name of the Holy Trinity and teaching them to obey all things that the Lord has commanded us.

Amen.