

## A Sermon For Holy Trinity Sunday

Isaiah 6:1-8, Acts 2:14, 22-36, John 3:1-17

### Knowing our God Rightly

A story is told by Saint Augustine, one of the great leaders of the early church. He was bishop of Hippo in the early 4th century. This brilliant scholar was writing a famous book on the Triune God in which we worship. One day he was walking along the beach of North Africa where he saw a small boy with a pail, pouring seawater into a small hole he had dug in the sand. Augustine watched the boy run back and forth to fill the pail up with water and then run to the hole to fill it up. Eventually Augustine asked the boy what he was doing. "I am pouring the sea into this hole," Don't be stupid, you can't fit the sea into that little hole. You are wasting your time." The boy shot back, "And so are you trying to write a book on God." Augustine did write that book, and with the boy's help he did it with great humility for which the church is eternally grateful.

Today is Holy Trinity Sunday. It always comes on the Sunday following Pentecost. After Pentecost the disciples experienced all three persons of the Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Today we celebrate The Doctrine of the Triune God. It is teaching that say God is One God, three persons, not in turn at different times. God is all three at the same time and 100% each person on the time while He is One God. The Father, Son, Holy Spirit are Co-equal in power and majesty

That is who God is, but today we celebrate more about who God is for us and what He has done for us. We cannot separate the two with know who God is. In learning what God has done for us we began to know Him rightly. In essence the one God is a relationship of Father Son and Holy Spirit.

We learn much about God by how the three persons relate to one another. God wants us humans to relate to one another in a similar way, drawn into God's very own Holy life. If this sounds baffling to you do not be discouraged. It is a mystery beyond our full comprehension.

God's fullness and greatness and especially the doctrine of the Trinity is certainly beyond our full comprehension. Our little brains and hearts are not capable of taking it all in or even capable of answering all the questions we have ask about God. However, are not left ignorant. God has revealed what we do need to know. We find this in the words and Scripture and in the flesh and blood Word of Jesus. We can learn much about God, how he feels toward us, what He wants of us and how he can transform our lives into the people He created us to be.

The three scripture lessons for today give us all that we need to know. Our First lesson from the book of Isaiah describes the call of Isaiah to be prophet. Isaiah was in the great temple of Jerusalem. Perhaps he had gone there to pray because the nation of Israel was in great crisis. King Uzziah who had ruled the land wisely for 60 years had died and the people were suffering a terrible sense of loss and feared their future. As Isaiah looks into the inner sanctum of the temple, he has his vision which he tells about in Isaiah 6. The room became smoke filled, God was high and lifted-up, as if Isaiah were looking into

heaven. In this vision the robe of God flows from heaven and the train of His robe filled the whole room. Angels flying to and fro sing a song of praise to God, "Holy, Holy, Holy." their song sings of majesty, mystery, power, and worthiness." Our God is an awesome God.

Our first hymn for today is based on Isaiah's vision. "Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty...God in three persons, blessed Trinity." Although Trinity does not appear in the this lesson the repetition of the word, "Holy" three times is seen by Christians as a reminder of the Trinity being recognized and praised as Holy. Later in verse 8 God asks, "Who shall I send and who will go for us?" Notice that God refers to Himself as us. We can see this a reference to the relationship within God's own self, Father Son and Holy Spirit communicating among themselves over whom to send to be the prophet.

Of course, Isaiah fears for his life. It is an awesome thing to be in the presence No one could look at God face to face and come away alive. So, Isaiah says, "Woe is me! for I am a man of unclean lips and I live among a people of unclean lips, yet my eyes have seen the king, the Lord of hosts." This is the only human response in the presence of the Holy God. A fearful recognition of our own sinfulness and unworthiness. We are not holy, far from it. What will God do to us? This is why we begin every worship service confessing our sins and praying, "Lord have mercy." We are doing what Isaiah did when he realized he was in God's presence.

Then God does something wonderful. He forgives Isaiah. He sends a seraph down to fly to the fire that burns on the altar for the temple sacrifices and picks up one of the red-hot coals and touch it to Isaiah's lips. This piece of coal purifies Isaiah's mouth so that He can now speak to This panicked nation and confused people in this time of crisis. What a wonderful thing to know about God. We have a God who desires us to be drawn into His Holy life, forgives us and makes right, not with a burning coal, but through His only Son.

In our lesson from Acts we get a portion of Peter's Pentecost sermon. The people who heard this sermon saw the work of God for them even if they played a part putting Jesus on the cross. They really did not know who God was so they did not know that Jesus who they had crucified was God in the flesh. They did not know what that meant. Peter preaches to them showing the Old Testament prophecies that Jesus' death and resurrection was the plan all along. Because this is who God is, a loving and merciful God who would do all these things for sinners like us. When God is doing all these for us it looks like it is far from glory we saw in Isaiah with God High and lifted up.

In our Gospel for the day we see Jesus having conversation a pharisee named Nicodemus. Nicodemus states that he is in the presence of God and would like to know more. Jesus tells Nicodemus that he must be born again or from above. Jesus is thinking of spiritual rebirth, coming to a new experience of how God relates to us and works in our lives. One of the most important questions we humans can ask is "How do we sinful human beings come to right relationship with God?" It was the central question of the reformation. It is ultimate question that Nicodemus is encountering with Jesus. Jesus tells him the right relationship with God comes through the way of grace and love, not by good works or obedience to the law in order to gain God's favor. Jesus is the way of grace. While Nicodemus desired some glorious sign for this to be accomplished Jesus showed Nicodemus about an event from Israel's history when they

wandered in the wilderness. Instead of flashy and miraculous Jesus points him to a bronze serpent lifted high on a pole. When the snake bitten children of God turned to the bronze serpent they would be healed. In the same way Jesus the Son of God would be lifted up on a cross that whoever looks to Jesus high and lifted up on the cross and believes has eternal life. By dying on the cross for our sins and being raised from the dead for us, He reconnects us with God. Christ restores our relationship and fellowship with God, so that God's own spirit lives within us. Apart from the Cross of Christ you can't know of God's love and mercy.

In Jesus, the saving love of God comes into the world. "For God so Loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in Him may not perish but may have eternal live." This is the wonderful saving work of God the Son. Martin Luther writes, "Apart from Christ you will not find God...seek God nowhere but in Christ who lays in a manger, or on the cross, in baptism, in the holy Supper, in the ministry of the Divine Word, or in my neighbor, that is when I Find Him."

Wow! What a God we have! Cherish Father, Son and Holy Spirit. God's own self in Holy Community of Three Persons working together for our own good. We are invited into that community/relationship to be with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. As we are adopted into this extended family of God, genuine community among us reflecting God's very image. In this community of faith, we experience the Divine. Our experience with one another in this Christian community informs us of who God is. In this community of faith we are nourished By Christ by his word and the sacraments. What a life. The Holy Trinity calls us into a fellowship of the people of God. For is this we need to thank, praise, serve and obey Him.

Amen.