

Holy Trinity – Vicar Anderson sermon  
St. John 3:1-15 “The Holy Trinity’s Work is Active in Your Life.”  
June 4 2023 | Saude, Jerico, & Redeemer Lutheran Churches

**In Nomine Iesu**

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O God, the Creator and Savior of the world, who made Yourself known in the work of man’s redemption as the mystery of the ever adorable Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, Three in One and One in Three, we humbly ask You, reveal in us the full power of this faith, into which we have been planted by Baptism, that, being born of water and of the Spirit, we may by a life of holiness be formed into Your image here and rise to Your blissful presence hereafter, there to join, with the song of the seraphim, in praising You, now and forever. Amen. (The Lutheran Liturgy, companion altar book for The Lutheran Hymnal, p. 134)

*Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen. (Rom. 1:7, etc.)*

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*The sermon text for today is taken from the 3rd chapter of the Gospel according to St. John. We read selected verses in Jesus’ name:*

Truly, truly, I say to you, we speak of what we know, and bear witness to what we have seen, but you do not receive our testimony. If I have told you earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you heavenly things? No one has ascended into heaven except he who descended from heaven, the Son of Man. And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.

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*These are Your words, heavenly Father. Sanctify us by Your truth, Your Word is truth. Amen. (Joh. 17:17)*

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In Christ Jesus, who with God the Father and the Holy Spirit are one God, one Lord, who in the confession of the only true God, we worship the Trinity in person and the Unity in substance, of majesty co-equal, dear fellow redeemed:

In the last ten years, I have mostly moved once a year. First it was to college. After nine months, I packed everything up and brought it home. Then I moved for Seminary, then to Iowa, and later this month, to my first call to serve as pastor in Klamath Falls, Oregon. Packing and unpacking, packing, and unpacking. My wife and I are working to make sure everything is secured in boxes. Our text for today is teaching how some have tried to pack up God. The world and maybe we have wondered, how can we have a triune God who is also one true God? Is that even possible? Should packing God into a box even be done? The answer is that we do not want to try and pack God into a box. It is not possible. Yet how do we reason with God being triune? Our God is holy, perfect, and righteous. Jesus in our text explains how God is triune. The trinity is active in your life for your good. Jesus teaches you and Nicodemus how this is possible.

Nicodemus points out how they believe that Jesus was sent from God. “*Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher come from God, for no one can do these signs that you do unless God is with him.*” The Pharisees reveal that there is a God. They understand that God does exist. As they believe that God exists, they refuse to believe that Jesus came down from heaven to die for them. They don't

believe that Jesus is God in the flesh. They pack God into a box with their lack of understanding of the Scriptures.

As Nicodemus reveals that Jesus is a prophet, he doesn't understand what Jesus is telling him. *'Nicodemus said to him, "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?" Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.'* It is easy to understand why after hearing this, Nicodemus needs clarification. Jesus gives Nicodemus an explanation that His teaching is about heavenly things, but Nicodemus should know this as He is the teacher of Israel.

The reason that Nicodemus is having a hard time with this is because He has the wrong understanding about God's Law. The Pharisees believed they were saved by their works. They had created their own laws, so it looked as though they were following God's Law. This belief skewed their judgement, causing them to be upset about Jesus and His work as the Son of Man.

This concept of the Trinity, a Son of Man, how do we understand it? How do we explain that God is one God in three persons? By us believing that God is God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit, we have alienated ourselves from the rest of the world and their beliefs. We are told that if we just believe in "a god", we will easily fit in with everyone else. Why can't we just have "a god"? If we have "a god", or we try to remove the Trinity from the one true God then this is what we have, *"for he comes to judge the earth. He will judge the world in righteousness, and the peoples in his faithfulness"* (Psalm 96:13). This is God boxed up into our glorious, most holy judge. He will come and judge the world in righteousness and faithfulness.

Our righteousness and faithfulness do not compare to what God wants. Jesus tells us, *"You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect"* (Matthew 5:48). We cannot appease God and be perfect for Him. And since we can't be perfect, we deserve His holy wrath and punishment. Like the Pharisees and the world, we can strive as much as we can and change God's laws to be born again on our own, but it never works out. Jesus then tells Nicodemus that the prophets have been ignored.

*"Truly, truly, I say to you, we speak of what we know, and bear witness to what we have seen, but you do not receive our testimony. If I have told you earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you heavenly things?"* Here Jesus is telling Nicodemus that what Jesus and the prophets have spoken in Scripture will happen even if the world won't receive it. He has tried to explain it in an earthly way, but Nicodemus still lacked understanding. As this cuts us to the heart, Jesus tells Nicodemus, He tells us what their testimony is all about.

The prophets prophesied that a Savior would come. That Savior cannot be just anyone. *"No one has ascended into heaven except he who descended from heaven, the Son of Man."* Jesus confirms to Nicodemus that what the Pharisees think is true. Jesus has come from God. He is true God and the Son of Man. Our text ends with Jesus saying, *"And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life."*

Jesus teaches that this can only happen with the work of the triune God, and this is how He is active. God the Father has mercy on all of mankind. He sends the Son of Man to suffer and die for all people. How is Nicodemus born again? It is not based on his works. He is born again by

the work of the Holy Spirit who brings the work of the Son of Man to him as "*The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So, it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.*" It's not Nicodemus work, it's not our work. It is the Trinity active in your life.

God is righteous and merciful. He is so merciful that He did the unthinkable for you. Like Nicodemus, we can't fathom that God would be so merciful that He would send His one and only Son. Jesus points out that the Father is looking out for you. He blesses you beyond all measure. He provides for your earthly needs, and He does the unthinkable by providing for your spiritual needs. He sent His Son to earth and born of flesh and blood. The Son of Man, felt your pains, sufferings, and temptations. He suffered this earthly life perfectly for you. He loved you so much, that He put your sins on His back that the Father's perfect righteousness and holy judgement came down on Him that He was judged guilty of death even though He was innocent.

Jesus like that serpent, was raised up on the cross, becoming a curse for you. So that He would not have to judge you guilty of what you deserved. Jesus died and rose from the dead for your future. Your eternal future is eternal life in heaven not because of anything that you could do, but because of the death of your Savior.

To have eternal life, God can't be packed into a box as just "a god". We wouldn't be able to be in His presence. Our triune God, not only rules over you, but He takes care of and comes directly to you in the Word and Sacraments. He comes to you in the Word as the Word is Christ. He speaks directly to you, He knows that you have sinned and because of your repentance, He forgives your sins. In baptism, you were baptized with the name of the triune God into the death of Christ. You were marked with the sign of the cross the mark of your Savior. The water and the Word washes away sins and drowned your old Adam. In Holy Communion Christ commands, you to come often to receive His holy body and blood for the forgiveness of your sins. Physical comfort of your Savior with you. These gifts that the Father has mercifully given you because of the life of His perfect Son come to you through these means by the work of the Holy Spirit.

Your baptism, going to communion, and hearing the Word of God preached to you strengthens your faith. You can be certain of your new life in Christ because this is not you're doing. The work of the Holy Spirit brings you faith in Christ. Every good work that you do is because of the Holy Spirit. This is your new life, and the Trinity is constantly at work for your good. And when the problems of this life get you to again question like Nicodemus, "*How can these things be?*" The Holy Spirit works faith, you confess your sins, and He once again brings you comfort and assurance that you have been forgiven by Christ, giving you the blessing of eternal life.

This text is not quite the same as packing up belongings and moving them across the country. We see the opposite, that God cannot be contained. If God was contained into a supreme being, there would be no benefit for us. We would see how we cannot achieve what He wants from us. The Holy Trinity is active in our lives. God the Father blesses us, God the Son redeems us, and we receive all of this through the work of God the Holy Spirit. Three distinct persons, one true God. We will never be able to unpack this information because like Nicodemus, we are sinners. But as we confess our sins, the Holy Spirit works faith in our hearts giving us new life, and like

Nicodemus we hear forgiveness in the Son of Man being raised up like that serpent on a pole. The next verse brings us comfort until the end of time. *"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life"* (John 3:16). Amen.

*Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost; as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, forevermore. Amen.*

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