

SERMON NOTES FOR HOLY TRINITY SUNDAY A

Utilizing the explanation of the Apostles' Creed in Luther's *Small Catechism*

PREACHED JUNE 11, 2017 AT ZION LUTHERAN, ENOLA PA

TEXTS: Genesis 1.1-2.3; Hebrews 1.1-4; John 14.15-19, 25-27; Matthew 28.16-20

Introduction

This Sunday in our church year is the only one in which we focus on a doctrine or theology of our faith. We confess our belief in a Triune – a three-part – God. The three parts are not separate per se – they are all part of the whole, One God – yet they have separate functions or foci, if you will. And what strikes me as I read through Luther's explanations of the three articles of the Apostles' Creed is that this three-personed God is perfect: perfect in the sense that it is complete and whole. Nothing else is needed. We have a perfect God. So, let's launch right in.

Part I

- God is creator
- God continues to create, providing everything we need
- We were created in God's image as co-creators
- God placed us in the midst of goodness of creation, and gave us the responsibility to be stewards of God's creation to tend and care for it.
- If we honor the earth as God does, and we take our responsibility as stewards seriously, our decisions about how we live and what we value should change
- Even God understood the importance of Sabbath, and we should too. Part of that Sabbath should be spent worshipping and giving thanks to our Triune God, as we do today.

Part II

- Jesus is, first and foremost, God in human form
- At the same time, God was/is still God, still divine
- Jesus was the perfect example of love, so if we need to know how to treat ourselves and others – as well as God – we need only look to Jesus' example.
- Jesus' ultimate purpose was for our salvation. All the suffering was for us, so that we would have our sins forgiven and have eternal life – life forever with God.
- A question from last week's Sunday School session: When did Jesus know that he was God? We simply don't know.

Part III

- As recorded in the gospel of John, Jesus promised the disciples an Advocate, to be with us forever.
- Jesus was our first Advocate, and in his post-resurrection appearance we read in Matthew, also promised to be with us always. So we are never alone. Even if we feel alone, we can know with certainty that God in three persons is with us.

- The Holy Spirit is the most difficult part of the Trinity for us to comprehend because there's nothing to look at, nothing so concrete that we can know with certainty, "This is God!" But if we open ourselves up to God's presence, to God's guidance, God's leading, it will come.
- Last Sunday, Rachel Johnson told us her story of how the Spirit has worked in her life, and how many times God spoke to her and she ignored it. (But she's not ignoring it anymore!)
- I love Luther's explanation here, that I cannot by my own understanding come to know God without the Holy Spirit. It's not up to us to "get" God. God comes to us through the Holy Spirit, in the person of Jesus Christ, through the beauty and joy of creation.
- The truth is, we will never know God fully in this life. But we are encouraged to continue to explore and expand our understanding of God.
- And, we are called – commissioned - to share it with others, to *"go and make disciples of all nations,"* baptizing them in the name of the Triune God. The Good News is that we do not go it alone. *"And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age."*

THE CREED

From Luther's *Small Catechism*

The First Article: *On Creation*

I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.

What is this? OR What does this mean?

I believe that God has created me together with all that exists. God has given me and still preserves my body and soul: eyes, ears, and all limbs and senses; reason and all mental faculties. In addition, God daily and abundantly provides shoes and clothing, food and drink, house and farm, spouse and children, fields, livestock, and all property - along with all the necessities and nourishment for this body and life. God protects me against all danger and shields and preserves me from all evil. And all this is done out of pure, fatherly, and divine goodness and mercy, without any merit or worthiness of mine at all! For all of this I owe it to God to thank and praise, serve and obey him. This is most certainly true.

The Second Article: *On Redemption*

I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried; he descended to the dead [*or, "he descended into hell," another translation of this text in widespread use*]. On the third day he rose again; he ascended into heaven, he is seated at the right hand of the Father, and he will come to judge the living and the dead.

What is this? OR What does this mean?

I believe that Jesus Christ, true God, begotten of the Father in eternity, and also a true human being, born of the virgin Mary, is my Lord. He has redeemed me, a lost and condemned human being. He has purchased and freed me from all sins, from death, and from the power of the devil, not with gold or silver but with his holy, precious blood and with his innocent suffering and death. He has done all this in order that I may belong to him, live under him in his kingdom, and serve him in eternal righteousness, innocence, and blessedness, just as he is risen from the dead and lives and rules eternally. This is most certainly true.

The Third Article: *On Being Made Holy*

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting.

What is this? OR What does this mean?

I believe that by my own understanding or strength I cannot believe in Jesus Christ my Lord or come to him, but instead the Holy Spirit has called me through the gospel, enlightened me with his gifts, made me holy and kept me in the true faith, just as he calls, gathers, enlightens, and makes holy the whole Christian church on earth and keeps it with Jesus Christ in the one common, true faith. Daily in this Christian church the Holy Spirit abundantly forgives all sins—mine and those of all believers. On the last day the Holy Spirit will raise me and all the dead and will give to me and all believers in Christ eternal life. This is most certainly true.