

## **“I don’t believe in a god”**

(Isaiah 6:1-8, Rom 8:12-17, John 3:1-17)

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!

As you know today we celebrate the Trinity Sunday. That’s why we had these reading from both the Old and the New Testament where God reveals Himself as the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.

So, the Trinity... what is it? Can you explain it? If someone asked you, what is this Trinity about, what would you say? British essayist Dorothy Sayers writing with a bit of humour suggested that if asked we would probably say something along these lines:

“The Father is incomprehensible, the Son is incomprehensible and the whole things is incomprehensible.” That pretty much sums it up, doesn’t it? But is that it, is that all that we could say about the holy Trinity?

Let me ask you a different question? Would it matter for you, would it change anything if instead of the Trinity we worshipped simply one god? Would it change how you think about God, how you tell about Him to others?

These are very important questions. Everyone knows that there is something higher and most people choose to call this something – a god. That’s how it is. This knowledge that there is God is built into us, and we can’t erase it, we can only choose to deny it.

What does one do when they believe that there is a god? They can just ignore this knowledge and go about their life. Or one could choose to be on good terms with this something.

To do something to gain his favour. Usually it about living moral and responsible life. “I am good, so you be good to me.” Or it could be even about worshipping this something. You would have met people like this.

Unfortunately, it is possible that people who think like this are among us. People who believe that there is a god and we need to do something to gain His favour. Are they Christians? Some may think that if they believe that there is a god, that makes them Christians.

No, it doesn’t. Christians don’t believe that there is a god. Instead, Christians know the true God. And it is not about knowing that there is true God, it is about knowing Him as He is, knowing Him personally and intimately.

I’ll give you an illustration. Imagine, you meet a friend and start chatting. ‘Do you know that old house on Gomersal road? I believe someone has moved in. Because I saw that someone has taken care of garden, and in evenings there is a light in the house. I believe that someone must be living there.’ This is like saying ‘I believe that there is a god or something’.

But then you answer to your friend. “I know who you are talking about. His name is Jimmy. I know Him. He is a nice guy. He works in Adelaide, and has two dogs, and takes care of His elderly parents, and worships at Schoenborn.

He loves to read history books, and he loves his bike, and he really hopes to settle down and to have a family. He is my dear friend and we catch up almost every weekend.” Can you see the difference?

The first one was about a vague idea that there should be something. The second is about knowing the person, knowing personally, knowing through being together and through conversations.

The first one had no idea who that person was. That’s how it is with the people who believe that there is a god. They have no idea who the true God is. The second illustration was about close and intimate relationships, about knowing that person for who he was.

This is how Christian faith is radically different from the belief that there is a god. We know the true God, we know who He is, what He has done and does, we know Him personally and through conversations with Him.

Okay, but how does this happen? How do we know Him? First, we can say that we know the true God in Jesus Christ, for He is the Father’s only Son and He has revealed to us what the true God is like, and what His attitude towards us is.

He has reveal us that the whole Trinity, the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit are loving and merciful God, slow to anger and abundant in steadfast love, forgiving all our sins and showing grace to the thousand generation.

Second, we can say that we know Him when He meets us to reveal His loving heart, to be with us, and to bless us? Where does that take place? You know the answer. Right here. In the Divine Service.

This is, why it is called the Divine Service. Because this is the setting where God the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit comes to those whom He has called out of this world.

That’s, why we don’t have any authority to mock around with what we do in the Divine Service. We are authorized to do only what our God Himself has commanded. We have no authority to say, – “I want this, or I don’t want that”.

It is the Triune God’s service to us. We don’t come here to do something for Him. He comes to do something for us. And that is, why He has given the Church this gift, the office of public ministry, the office of the Word and Sacrament, or we call them simply – pastors.

The Triune God has called us, prepared us, and sent us to act on behalf of Him. He gives His gifts through pastors, and you He invites to come and rest and to focus on receiving His blessings. This is how you are involved – when you focus on receiving God’s gits.

Besides, no pastor has authority to do something that is not commanded by the Lord of the Church Himself. Because this is His Divine Service. We simply stand here in place of Jesus Christ. To speak what He has commanded, to teach and preach what He has revealed, and to do what He has authorized.

If you hear or see your pastor saying of doing something that is contrary to what our Lord has commanded, be gracious and speak with him, call him to explain what he is doing, or if that is needed, call him to repentance. And your pastor will be grateful to you.

We are fallen human beings as everyone else. Sometimes even more. We need the accountability not only before the One who has called us, but also before the people to whom we are sent to serve. We need your help to remain faithful, and not to be lead astray trying to please people.

Now, if this is God's own service to us, then how do we know Him as the Trinity in the service? Let's see briefly. How do we begin the service? In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.

It means, by His command and responding to His invitation, and acknowledging that it is His service to us, and that He is present among us. Then we continue with confession and absolution, and the whole Trinity is at work there.

Who convicts us of our sins? Yes, the Holy Spirit does. Who do we pray to forgive us? Yes, God the Father. Why would He forgive us? Because of what Jesus His Son has done for us.

Then pastor speaks standing here as a messenger of the Triune God and in the name and by the authority of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit forgives you all your sins. Then the Holy Spirit assures you that is it God's own forgiveness and gives you joy.

You are forgiven! The Kingdom is yours! Come to the feast! Then we confess our faith in the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit together with the Church Universal. In all times and in all places.

How can we do that? By our own power we can't believe. And no one can say that Jesus is the Lord except in the power of the Holy Spirit. As we confess our faith, we do it in the power of the Holy Spirit. This is how we confess our faith.

Next. The Father sent His Son to deliver the Good News to us. The Son sends His messengers, pastors, to deliver the Good News to all people. As a pastor speaks the words of the Triune God, the Holy Spirit brings these words into your hearts, purifying your souls, renewing your minds, growing you in wisdom and strengthening your faith. The whole Trinity engages with you.

On one hand, it is your pastor, as a fallen and imperfect human being speaking to you, but at the same time, it is the Triune God conversing with you as His beloved children. What a privilege it is to be able to listen to the Triune God!

Then the unbelievable happens. The Father invites us to the feast of His Son, where His Son Himself serves the most precious meal. In this meal He gives us His holy body and blood with bread and wine, and thus feeds us with forgiveness and eternal life. Then He sends us, with His blessing as He Himself accompanies us.

There is nothing grater, nothing more majestic in this world, than the Divine Service, even if it doesn't appear so to our eyes. Because it is the Triune God the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit who humbly serves us here.

And how do we respond to this unbelievable, undeserved gift of our heavenly Father? Sometimes I got very sad. Sometimes it seems that for many the response is – can we get rid of the Divine Service? Can we do something more interesting? More casual, more fun... Really?

Two weeks ago, many of you watched the royal wedding. What did you see? Many famous and influential people. All following the dress code. Respectfully participating in the wedding ceremony, sitting and standing. Even saying the Lord's prayer. Rejoicing in the privilege to be a part of the event.

Couldn't they make it simpler? More casual? More fun? More accessible to today's shallow and disrespectful society? You know that these questions are totally inappropriate. But think about this. It was just a royal wedding.

Just a royal wedding... Here we have so much more. The Triune God has invited you of all people into His eternal feast, even if you are not such a celebrity or an influential person. He has invite you together with all the saints from the beginning of the world till its end. How do we respond?

If we could fully understand what is happening here, we would be overjoyed. I think that most of us are taught well to be respectful in the presence of the Triune God. But to be respectful doesn't mean to make a sad face or to pretend that we are without emotions.

We are respectful when we appreciate what the Triune God does for us right here right now. We are respectful when we overflow in joy for what we receive here in the Divine Service. Jesus didn't say: "I do not forgive you." Then we should be frightened and sad. No, He said: "I do forgive you all your sins!"

You are forgiven. Before God. Now you are about to receive the eternal life from the hands of Jesus. You are counted among God's chosen people. Be respectful by rejoicing in these gifts, by smiling. Why would we hide the overflowing joy that Jesus is with us and that we'll be with Him?

When you, filled with the Holy Sacrament and with God's own Spirit turn and see your brothers and sisters, your family with whom you will spend eternity, share this joy with them.

What do you do in your family when there is a great joy? You want to embrace them, you want to hold them, you want to say good things to them. This is your

family in Christ! Feel free to share your joy with them. Let the whole community see it and wonder... what is going on with these Christians!

That should be our response to the wonderful gifts that we receive from the God whom we know as our God. As you leave today, remember, we don't believe in a god. We know the true God. He is your loving Father in heaven. Jesus is your Saviour and your faithful brother. The Holy Spirit unites you with the Father and the Son and with all the Christians around the world in one holy eternal fellowship of Divine family.

You have received this privilege to know God and one day you will even see Him as He is and will rejoice with all the saints in the heavenly feast. There will be no end to that joy. Amen.