

“Who is He and who are you?”

Based on readings from Trinity Sunday: Romans 8 and John 3.

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

What Sunday is today? Yes, the Trinity Sunday? How many Trinity Sundays do we have every year? Yes, just one, just one. But how many times do we refer to the Triune God in the Divine Service every Sunday? Can you guess? It surely varies from Service to Service but it will not be far from two dozen times. Every Service!

But on this one Sunday we get to confess the Athanasian Creed and to ponder on the doctrine of the Trinity. The Trinity. The Triune God. One God and three persons. But does it matter? Does it make any difference?

Isn't that enough to know that there is a God, one God and that's all we need? Not at all! Besides, the Biblical revelation of the true God as the Trinity gives us His own answers to some of the most profound questions.

Such as - **who God is and how He relates to us**. But also, **who we are and why we are here. This is what we will briefly reflect on today**. On who our God is and how He relates to us, who we are and why we are here.

Who is God and how does He relate to us? So, what's the difference between knowing that there is one God and knowing this one God as the Trinity, as the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit? Is there any difference? O, yes!

The difference is no less than between life and death, between salvation and destruction, between the New Heavens and New Earth and the lake of fire. Seriously. But why? Why such a big deal? Why would believing that there is one God be like death, but knowing Him as the Trinity be like life? Let's see.

Because we are not saved by the intellectual knowledge that there is one God. Throughout history many have come to that conclusion. As Paul the apostle wrote to Romans: “For what can be known about God is plain to us, because God has shown it to us. For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made.” (Rom 1:18-19)

The knowledge of God is built into us, that's why all languages have the word “god”, that's why vast, vast majority of people who have ever walked the earth believed in the existence of some sort of deity. But to know with our mind that there must be a creator, or some first mover, or something higher, that doesn't save us.

We can devise different ideas about God, and this is what we have done, that's why we have so many religions, but they all are exactly that, our ideas, our attempts to answer this inconvenient question – who is He?

What is He like and how are we to relate to Him? Those ideas may be more appealing to us or less, but they all come from us. But how then is the Biblical revelation of God as the Trinity different from any other idea of one God?

Because it is exactly that, true God's own revelation of who He is and how He relates to us. On our own we cannot know or even less to trust Him. As the Scriptures reveal it to us, on our own we are dead in our sins (Eph 2).

We don't seek for the true God; we don't want to know Him (Rom 3). We are happy to be 'spiritual' and entertain our own ideas about who is out there, but we are hostile to the true God. We would rather die in our ignorance and hostility.

Unless He first comes to us and reveals Himself. But when He comes to us and when He reveals Himself to us, it is so much more than simply giving us the correct knowledge of who He is, that wouldn't help us much.

So, what does He do? First, by revealing who He is as One God and three Persons, He immediately establishes proper relationships with us. This is a bit funny. Since the Fall we have wanted to be like gods. We want to be in control.

One of the ways we feel in control is when we can comprehend something with our minds. If we believe we have understood something we feel we are in control. By the way, this is why the whole world spends days and years consuming news, for that feeds this illusion that we know and that we are somehow in control.

Of course, we are not. But see how this works with our God. As soon as He reveals who He is, One God, one! but also three Persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, three! What does our mind do? It can't comprehend this reality; it can't control it. Three and one, one and three... Right away we are put in our proper place. He is God, and we are not. For the old Adam in us it is not that easy to concede.

Now, here comes the real difference, the one which means life for us. We could simply describe how the Triune God engages with us this way. The Father sends His Son to reveal Himself to us and the Father and the Son send the Holy Spirit to create new hearts in us, to create in us true faith. The Spirit then brings us to the Son, Jesus Christ, and through the Son we not only get to know the Father, but we are adopted and welcomed as members of His family.

Once again. The Father sends the Son, the Son reveals the Father and sends the Spirit to us, the Spirit brings us to the Son, Jesus Christ, and the Son reveals us the Father and the Father welcomes us in the divine fellowship with the whole Trinity.

The Spirit is the difference between life and death. What does this mean? It means that the true God, the Spirit of life comes to you and indwells in you, He gives you a new life, eternal life, and He embraces you in the divine fellowship with the Father and the Son and with all God's saints. Get this!

When the true God reveals Himself to you, He does it by embracing you in the most intimate fellowship with Him. He binds you to Himself with the most intimate bond, more intimate than we know. He binds together your heart and His, forever.

See, that is not our doing. That is not our idea. We cannot know the Triune God, even more, be united with Him, or be adopted in His family on our own. That is not in our power. This is purely out of Fatherly goodness and care for us.

To emphasize once again, we are able to embrace any human devised idea of God, if we find it attractive. When it comes to knowing and trusting in the Triune God, it is His gift to us, He has chosen you and embraced in life-giving fellowship with Him. The difference really is between death and life, salvation and destruction. No less!

And how does He do such great, such incredible things, how does He come to us, indwells in us, unites us with Himself? Using the most ordinary means. Can you guess? Yes... He speaks to you. The true God reveals Himself when someone tells you about Him. When you read the Scriptures. When you listen to the sermon. When you participate in Bible study.

He also does it using elements of creation; water, bread and wine. How incredibly gracious and patient the true God is! He comes to us and He bestows upon us His promises. He comes and declares: "I forgive you all your sins, I take them all upon myself, I assume all the responsibility and I will take care of all the consequences."

He does this to us, and we have no clue how great the gift given to us. When were you baptised? How long ago? Some of you may be baptised when you were adults. On that day, did you have any idea how many times you will let your gracious and forgiving God down?

Since then, how many times have you sinned against Him? With your ungratefulness, with your disobedience, indifference, lust, anger, jealousy, envy, gossip, coveting, stinginess, greed, adultery, with all of this is our desires, passions, thoughts, words and actions... How many times?!

He knew all of that on the day of your baptism, and also about everything wrong that you will do till your last breath. Still, He said: "I forgive you all your sins, I welcome you as my beloved child, as my son, as my daughter!"

And now He feeds us with His Holy Supper, He blesses us with His own Holy body and blood in the Sacrament. The Holy God places Himself in your hands and in your mouth. O... our mouths! What a holy place to be!

What words have we spoken! How often have we cursed, spoken in anger, spoken to hurt a person or their reputation, to smear their reputation by gossip? And how often do words of thanks and praise and prayer appear on our lips? Our God knows all of this, and He still places Himself in our mouths, to cleanse us, to strengthen our faith, to assure us that He will never ever give up on us. This much about our gracious, merciful and patient Triune God.

Now about the other set of answers that God's self-revelation as the Trinity helps us to answer, that is about us. Very briefly. What about us? When the Triune God comes to us and embraces us, He at once gives us a new, everlasting identity, yes, even the children of God. It is God's own Spirit who convinces you that this is who you are – a child of God: "Abba! Father!"

That you, a poor, miserable sinner, have been granted the incomprehensible honour and privilege to call the Holy God, God the Creator, your Father, that you can turn to Him at any time, that His ears are always open for you. Think about that!

Children of God, this is who you are, and this honour comes together with more abundant gifts of God. If children, the also heirs, heirs of the Father and co-heirs with Jesus, the true Son. This is who you are.

See what happens. Remember, the Father sent the Son, the Son sent the Spirit, and the Spirit led us to the Son who revealed to us the Father. But now, listen carefully! This is what now happens with you as children of God.

Now the Father sends... His children, yes, all of us, to continue His great rescue mission. He sends us as His sons and daughters, just as He sent His true Son, and His true Son Jesus has promised to be always with us.

Moreover, as the Father and the Son sent the Spirit, now you are given the same Spirit, and as you bring the words of the true God to others, you also bless them with God's own Spirit. And as you speak the words of God, the Spirit creates new hearts in those who listen and bring them to Jesus and to the Father.

See, what a privilege! Children of God, heirs of God, fellow missionaries with the Triune God. As Jesus Christ gave Himself for us, we are now "to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God" (Rom 12:1). Whatever we do, we do it to please our God; in every place He sends us, in every relationship He places us, in every situation of life, you represent Him for His Spirit dwells in you.

The Trinity. One God the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. God whom we cannot know or even seek on our own. He has chosen you, He has come to you, He has indwelt in you, He has made you His child and heir, He has embraced you in the divine fellowship with Him, and He has sent you with His Great Mission.

And that makes all the difference in the world. For this "God so loved the world, that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life." (John 3:10) And if "He did not spare His own Son but gave Him up for us all, how will He not also with Him graciously give us all things?" (Rom 8:32)

That makes all the difference...

Blessed Trinity Sunday, Brothers and Sisters!

Amen.