

Holy Trinity
June 3, 2012
Text: John 3:16-17
Theme: "Everything You Need to Know"

The Holy Trinity is complex and confusing. More than that it is not understandable or explainable with human language. We love to roll around in the mystery of the Trinity like a pig in the mud because we feel a need to try to explain everything and it makes us feel so smart to find a metaphor to do so. But all of our explanations end up in heresy because we do not have the intellect or the language to fully describe God. Yet we try. Because there is always part of our brains that says if we can understand God and quantify God, we can control God.

So, because we are so fascinated with explaining God rather than just following him, Christians are noted for getting theology and practice confused. Our theology forms our practice but NEVER, NEVER, NEVER should it be the other way around! It is when we get it backwards – when our practice begins forming our theology - that we begin saying all manner of ridiculous things. When we encounter some aspect of life that simply will not fit our explanation of God, what do we do? We have three choices. Change our practice. Change our theology. Or live with the incongruence. We want to do what we want to do so we don't want to change our practice. We hate incongruence in our lives so we want to resolve the issue. The

easiest thing to do is change theology. Change the way we understand God.

Some people just say that the Bible has to be interpreted according to modern conditions and then presto chango, we can do whatever we want! Some will walk away from the Bible and follow a religion created by man that resolves all the theology-practice conflicts either with rigid legalism, Islam for instance, or foundationless liberalism, Scientology. Most often, however, we just add to God's Word or subtract from it until we get him to say what we want him to say.

We grow up hearing things that Jesus really said and hearing human manipulations of what Jesus said and that is why Christians can become so confused. I once heard a Christian school teacher tell her kindergarten class that "Jesus loves you when you are quiet." She wanted God to say that he loves us best when we do what our teachers say. Our theology says that Jesus loves us in spite of our sin. It is his choice to love us and in fact to die for us as sinful we are. Our practice is to try to love our neighbor, including our teachers BECAUSE Jesus loves us never SO THAT Jesus will love us.

A youth told me once that when she confessed doubt of God, an adult told her, "If you doubt God, perhaps you shouldn't be at this church." That adult wanted church membership to be a reward for

faithful Christians. But our theology says that we are fed and converted by the Holy Spirit working through Word and Sacrament, so anyone who doubts God should especially be at this church. This is where the food for conversion and faith strengthening is offered! Our practice is to trust fully in God as our faith empowers us to do so but faith is not our work. If doubt arises, faith needs to be strengthened and only the Gospel can do that – never the Law.

A pastor once told a man, “Since you have sinned so greatly, perhaps you should not receive the Lord’s Supper.” That pastor wanted the Lord’s Supper to be a reward for faithful and good people but our theology says that the body and blood of Christ strengthen our faith and forgive our sins – so the person with great sin in his life needs it even more than a person who sins little. After all, Jesus came to heal the sick. Our practice says that if one defends a sin and does not wish forgiveness for it, it makes little sense to receive the Lord’s Supper. So the Lord’s Supper is not a reward for good behavior but medicine for one who wishes to get well.

Now the question is, how do we learn all the theology we need to practice our faith correctly? Most of us have day jobs and cannot study the Bible as much as we would like to, so what do we do?

When I was about 8 years old, I memorized John 3:16 and that day I learned all the theology I really needed to know.

“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.”

Everything since then has been for figuring out the best practice to exemplify that theology. Today is Holy Trinity Sunday and there will be sermons preached all over the world explaining the Holy Trinity except that it is not explained in Scripture and in fact cannot be explained. It is simply the Churches way of saying what the indescribable God says of himself.

The Holy Trinity is the way God reveals himself in his work among us. God the Father has created everything and still preserves it. God the Son died on the cross and suffered Hell to redeem us from the Devil. God the Holy Spirit creates faith in us and thus gives us the hand we need to grasp grace. He loves us. He loves us so much that he gave his only son for us to insure that we would live forever in paradise as he intended for us in the first place before sin destroyed his world.

That’s it. Everything you need to know. Beyond that, it’s just figuring out how to practice this theology in a sin drenched world. We know that we will make wrong choices. Jesus still loves us and gives his body and blood to forgive us and empower us to make better choices tomorrow. We know that we will fail to be as faithful

to God as we should be. Jesus still loves us and the Baptismal waters continue to wash us clean of sin so that we will have another chance to be faithful tomorrow.

“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

It really is everything you need to know.