

Sermon 2009 Holy Trinity
June 7, 2009
Text: John3: 1-17
Theme: "Worship. Don't Investigate."

I think it was Philip Melanchthon, author of much of the Book of Concord, who said that the Holy Trinity was so great and so mysterious that we would do better to worship it than to investigate it. Having said that, we immediately begin to quantify it, qualify it and explain it to satisfy our limited understanding. We use all kinds of metaphors from the world around us to try and explain it but human metaphors cannot grasp the mystery of the Holy Trinity.

Well it's like an apple. You have the skin, the meat and the core but it's all one apple. No, that is not right because I could peel an apple, and core an apple and then I would have three separate things. You cannot do that to God. If you touch Jesus, you touch the Father and the Spirit. That is why we can legitimately say that God died for our sins – not just a piece of God, the complete God died for our sins. That is the whole reason the Son, the second person of the Trinity, had to become human, so that God could be sacrificed for the salvation of his children.

So we try again. Well it's like water. Water can be liquid, steam or ice. Nope, not that either because whether liquid, steam or ice, water is still water in different forms. The Holy Trinity is not just an expression of the form God takes in any given situation, but three distinct persons. Why would Jesus pray to the Father in the Garden of Gethsemane if he were just taking the form of the Son? He spoke to the Father as though the Father were a distinct, separate person – because he is. Or if the Son were just God acting in a different form, when he died on the cross, who would be left to raise him from the dead? The Son died, but the Father raised him because neither the Father nor the Spirit died on the cross; only the Son.

So we try again. Well it's like a chocolate chip cookie, there's flour and butter and chocolate. They are all separate ingredients but they all blend together to make one cookie. No, the Holy Spirit is not just an ingredient to God, he is God. He acts where and when he pleases to turn the hearts of people toward the Father and to receive the forgiveness won by the Son. Nor is the Father just an ingredient in the Godhead. He has his own will and is his own person, sometimes a person with whom the Son contends as in the Garden of Gethsemane

when he asked the Father to find another way to save us but if there was no other way..."THY WILL BE DONE."

There is no explaining the Holy Trinity. We do not have anything in our language or our world that matches it or mirrors it. That was Nicodemus' difficulty. He was a Sadducee of epic proportions and everything needed to make sense for him to believe it. All he wanted for Jesus to do was give him the straight scoop on this whole salvation thing, but Jesus kept speaking in riddles about being born again.

There are times when things are not quantifiable and those of you who are artists with any medium: paint, words, clay, music; understand that better than most because the things which are not quantifiable is the birthplace of art. Sometimes things cannot be measured or captured with a formula – they just have to be experienced and the artist tries to convey the beauty and magnificence of the moment through his medium. The composer uses notes on a staff. The sculptor uses clay or stone. The poet uses language. But all are trying to express something bigger than mere formulas and equations.

Think of all the deepest emotions a human being experiences and that is what art tries to capture. First love, the moment a father first sees his daughter in her wedding dress, the last goodbye from one who is dying: these moments are all as indescribable as the Holy Trinity. Likewise they are as transitory. You cannot get God to stop and stand still for a few days or months or years so that we can study him. He blows in and he blows out like the wind swirling all around us and yet completely other than us and yet living in us all at the same time. It is indescribable.

So we worship. We cannot quantify these heavenly things, so we worship. For Nicodemus and for us, Jesus finally reduces it all to love.

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life." That's all. Just love. On this celebration of the Holy Trinity, it is enough that we worship the one who loved us this much and is powerful enough to deliver us to eternal paradise. AMEN.