

### **MATTHEW 28:16-20**

Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

### **JOHN 1:1-5**

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.

### **I CORINTHIANS 2:1-5;12-16**

When I came to you, brothers and sisters, I did not come proclaiming the mystery of God to you in lofty words or wisdom. For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and him crucified. And I came to you in weakness and in fear and in such trembling. My speech and my proclamation were not with plausible words of wisdom, but with a demonstration of the Spirit and of power, so that your faith might rest not on human wisdom but on the power of God...

Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit of truth that is from God so that we may understand the gifts bestowed upon us by God. And we speak of these things in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual things to those who are spiritual.

## THREE IN ONE

Matthew 28:16-20

John 1:1-5

I Corinthians 2:1-5;12-16

I shall begin this morning with a question for you: Have you ever been befuddled by the theological concept of the Trinity? I have! How can God be divided into threes? And yet, it is a theme that runs throughout the New Testament. As our opening hymn ended: "God in three persons; blessed Trinity." The question I have always struggled with is, What difference does it make? When I pray, to which of these members of the Godhead am I speaking? It's very confusing. I think we all believe that God is the Author and Creator of the universe. But John messes with our minds when he begins his Gospel with, *In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God.* Clearly, there was a second Person...or Holy Spirit...or some Energy that was both beside God and actually was God. How can this be? Who was that and where, by the way, was Jesus?

Well, we know he wasn't born yet so he had to either be pre-existent at the beginning or he didn't become the third member of the Divine Triad until his resurrection. But even if we accept that interpretation, it seems that the Holy Spirit didn't make an appearance until **after** the resurrection. And you could suggest in this scenario that the Holy Spirit took over when Jesus went to sit at the right hand of the Father. *And Jesus came to the eleven and said, All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always to the end of the age.* And then he disappeared for good.

So again I ask you: when you pray, to whom are you praying—the Father, the Son or the Holy Spirit...or all three? Sometimes the issue comes up in the strangest ways. I remember it did so and caught me by surprise during a Children's Moment several weeks ago. I was carrying on about our beautiful spring and brought in a little bouquet from my gardens

which featured different colors of flowers and I rhetorically asked the kids who had created all of these and I think it was Micheal who answered, “Jesus.” And I reflexively corrected him, “No, not Jesus—God.” Now he’s probably as befuddled as I am! It is an incomprehensible mystery to be sure which our logical minds simply cannot grasp. And should it really matter what we believe about it? If you can’t make sense of it, are you condemned to the fires of hell? I think not. Nevertheless, is there a benefit to struggling to understand it? I think so. Therefore, as a sequel to the sermon I preached on Pentecost where the Holy Spirit reportedly became the Divine Presence on earth, I would like to examine this issue from a different angle which may actually clear some of this up while at the same time perhaps enhancing our faith.

With all due respect to the author of our wonderful hymn of praise “Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty” who uses the just quoted phrase, “God in three persons, blessed Trinity”, our difficulty begins with seeing God as a person. God is not a person. No one has seen God and I think we can all agree that God is a Spirit and as John says, *Those who worship him must worship him in spirit and truth.* It is much more useful to think of God not as a person, but in terms of Manifestations. If God is indeed Creator of all—*In the beginning was the Word*, then the physical universe emerged from the imagination or the Mind of God and is thus a Manifestation of that Mind. So we could then see God as the Father. The teachings of Jesus as the Son could be understood as the Manifestation of the Father’s will for those whom the Father created. And the Holy Spirit would Manifest inner guidance and energy which results in joy, peace, health and love.

Metaphorically, God can be likened to the sun. There is only one sun, but it manifests itself as heat, light and energy. It gives life to all living creatures. It nourishes our physical bodies in ways we can’t actually see as it creates vitamin D, but if you take the sun away, everything on earth ceases to exist. You must have heat for creation; you must have enlightenment for wisdom; and you must have energy to live and have your being.

Listen once more to the first five verses of John: *In the beginning was the Word, and*

*the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was light of all people. The light shines in the darkness and the darkness did not overcome it.* Here is your Three In One.

Jesus understood that we are part of this divine nature. As Manifestations of the Mind of God the Father, we are each an expression of creation. We too are Three In One. We are physical beings having souls which give us the power to heal all kinds of sickness as Jesus did—physical, mental, emotional and spiritual; and the ability to reach out in love Manifesting mercy and kindness to all who share this earth with us motivated and guided by the Spirit which dwells within us.

What we believe about God does make a difference. At the same time, what we believe about ourselves also makes a difference. There is nothing in our faith that grants us permission to condemn any other human being—and I would include ourselves—who are Manifestations of the Divine Mind, brothers and sisters of Jesus, the Son of the Father. What we do have is not only the permission, but the mandate to follow the promptings of the Spirit within us to Manifest our love for our neighbors as ourselves.

Reverend Thomas Dunlap

June 2, 2024