

# Sermon Text for October 7, 2018

By Rev. Robert K. Bronkema

Psalm 8, Acts 5:27-42

## ***“Father...Son...Holy Spirit”***

I hope you understand the enormity of this Sunday in the Christian calendar. World Communion Sunday began in 1933, not too far away from here, at Shadyside Presbyterian Church in Pittsburgh. World Communion Sunday is a Sunday that we seek Christian unity in a fractured world. It is a time that we are able to point to what it is that holds us in common, which is the saving grace of our Savior Jesus Christ. It is an attempt to display to the world what keeps us together when it seems like all they hear is how churches are fractured and broken, it is an attempt to display that churches can be places of healing and strength and support. Today is World Communion Sunday, and so as you see the table with the elements, and as you prepare yourself today to take this communion know that you are not alone. Know that all across the world in all the languages of the world people in churches just like ours and very different from ours are taking communion and declaring that we are one just as God wants us to be one as brothers and sisters in Christ. This unity has to be stronger than anything that may attempt to tear us apart. Nothing can separate us from the love of God, and nothing ought to be able to separate us from the love of each other.

So what is it that actually unites us together as a Christian body? What is it that unites Protestants and Catholics and Orthodox and Pentecostals? It is that we believe in the Trinitarian God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. When I baptize I baptize in that name, when we get sent off in the benediction, we get sent off in that name. And wouldn't you know that in Acts today we find these verses that speak directly to the trinity even using the Trinitarian language of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. We have come a long way in Acts to arrive at this point. We've been looking at this earliest church as it grows and matures. We have seen Peter step out in faith and the communal living that they had. We saw a successful stewardship campaign that reminded us that being disciples of Jesus Christ is serious business.

Today, we find the trinity and the three dots that contain so much after each of the descriptive words. What it demands is that we understand who God is so even as we struggle with our limited language in describing God, we find in it our understanding of our limitless God.

## READ SCRIPTURE

So what do we know about the Trinity? If I were to ask you to explain the trinity and your understanding of it what would you say? We say that we believe that God is represented in the Trinity. Most of us could say Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, but then our knowledge would stop and our ability to communicate it would end.

Well, the church in Acts certainly had a crisis faith because they were living in constant crisis and always had to repeat and say and explain what they believed and why, often under the threat of death. We talked about that last week. The Scripture from today is exception.

Once again the disciples were arrested. I hope you followed what happened earlier: All of the disciples are thrown into jail, but an angel sets them free to tell the people the full message of this new life. They do that unknown to the clergy who put them in jail in the first place. Then it gets funny.

A keystone cops sequence follows where the clergy ask for them to be brought out of jail but they're not there. How do you lose 12 prisoners? As they're thinking about it someone comes in and says: You know those men you're looking for? Well they're right outside in the temple courts preaching again. So once again they go and arrest them.

Why are you accusing us of spilling the blood of Jesus, we hear today? Well, because you did. Matthew 27 tells us that when Jesus stood before Pilate, Pilate washed his hands in water and said I am innocent of this man's blood. But then the people outside wanting the death of Jesus said: let his blood be on us and on our children. Well, they got what they wanted and now are trying to deny it.

Peter's response is what we are going to focus on today because it contains the three parts of the Trinity that we need to look at. We are going to look at all that is wrapped up in the three dots that follow the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Turn to verses 30-32 and we see the sequence that Peter follows. The God of our Ancestors is that which we call the Father. The very same one that we find in Psalm 8 who is described as the creator of all things. The God of our ancestors is the one whom we see in the Old Testament who told Abraham to move when he was comfortable and to trust in God completely when he finally had his son. The God of our ancestors was the one who told Moses to stop living the good life as a shepherd and try to make some changes in the

world, don't worry, I will be there. We find the Father time after time as the one who will never leave or forsake us.

The Son we can find in the New Testament. The giver of forgiveness as Peter states in these verses. We find this forgiver born from a virgin, living a righteous sacrificial life. Dying a cruel bloody death. Being exalted to the point of being raised from the dead in his resurrection. The Son, Jesus Christ is God just as the Father, the creator is God.

Finally the Holy Spirit as Peter states that was given by the Father and the Son is that which is seen in Acts and following into today. Remember how I mentioned before that we are continuing the story of the early church. Well, the Holy Spirit on Pentecost filled the church with what they needed in order to be inspired and equipped to tell the good news. The Holy Spirit is that which gives us the courage when we would rather be timid and keep to ourselves rather each one of us reach one for the love of God. The Holy Spirit is what allows this church to celebrate 186 years of faithful ministry with unfaithful people. The Holy Spirit is what allows each of us to serve God while knowing that we are sinful, but God still able to use us.

The trinity is not three separate Gods. God the Father has been at work creating in the Old Testament and continues to create and recreate today. In John we hear that the Son was present in the beginning and that nothing came into being without the power and presence of the Word of God. The Holy Spirit moved over the waters of the deep before creation. We serve and worship one God who is alive and well in the church today.

In the last verses here in chapter 5 we find what happens when Peter tries to explain to the clergy the God that they serve. Well, they are beaten to a pulp. You know what I can't stand are those people who preach and those who believe that your life is going to get better when you accept Jesus as your Lord and Savior. Oh, don't get me wrong, you will have eternal life, you will have a reason for living, but people aren't going to be your best friends for the rest of your life because you accepted Christ. Part of the ... that we find in Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is that if we accept and believe all that is wrapped up in those dots, then we better be ready for what the world is going to throw at us.

The clergy beat up the disciples and look at their reaction. This is passion like beating, and they rejoiced that they were considered worthy to suffer for Christ. The trinity, more than anything else, gives us hope in the face of despair. The three dots

remind us that God has been present and has been working not just recently, but from the beginning of time. From alpha to omega God has been faithful to God's people and so we should think no differently that God is going to be faithful to us.

Why do we have such a hard time trusting in the God with the story behind his name? Think of the people that we trust in our every day life: waiters, doctors, baby-sitters.

Why do we have trouble trusting God in the midst of our persecutions and trials as the disciples did in their faith in the Trinitarian God who loved and them and worked things out for them. A way to think about it is that this life is a classroom and we are in school right now. We have to learn to grow through what we go through. Now I know that when I graduate from this school of life I am not going to graduate Magna cum laude, or summa cum laude or even cum laude, when I graduate from this life I hope that I have had enough faith in a God who gives us hope in the midst of despair that I can graduate thank you laude.

We have to be able to see the big picture of how God has been faithful to us throughout our life. If we don't grow through what we go through, then the Holy Spirit is liable to hold back our transcripts and we will have to repeat the course of whatever we are going through.

Amen.