

Study Guide May 27, 2018

Theme: Trinity Sunday

Readings: Isaiah 6:1-8; Psalm 29; Romans 8:12-17; John 3:1-17; Titus 2:11

This week we begin Ordinary Time in the lectionary. It follows Advent, Lent, Eastertide, and Pentecost, each of which focuses on the mystery of the life, death, and resurrection of Christ. Ordinary time, the longest period often lasting 33 weeks, follows the life of Christ. This is the time of conversion; living the life of Christ; growth and maturation. It is a time in which the mystery of Christ is called to penetrate ever more deeply into our being and history until all things are finally one in Christ.

This week we also celebrate Memorial Day, and the sacrifice that so many gave for our freedoms and liberties we share in this country. No one knows sacrifice better than Christ, who called us to live a life of service and sacrifice for others.

And if this isn't a busy enough week of celebration, this Sunday is also Trinity Sunday, where churches around the world will celebrate the great mystery of "one God in three persons." It's an important, yet difficult subject to wrap our heads around. In my message, I am abandoning the lectionary for one small verse from Paul's letter to Titus. It came to me after praying and meditating on what to preach on. While I don't always like to pull one sentence out of context to make a point, I am going against my better judgment to demonstrate how God, Father/Son/Spirit, is for us, with us, and in us. It all wraps around one word...and it's not Trinity.

READ: Isaiah 6:1-8; Revelation 4:6-8

This is one of my favorite stories in the entire bible. In Isaiah's heavenly vision we have the seraphs surrounding the throne of God continually singing praises. Using their wings to cover their faces and feet, the seraphs do not feel worthy to look upon God, nor to stand before him. Yet here is Isaiah, looking upon the living God and receiving his call in life – frightened but not fearful. Perhaps he's more afraid of his calling than of the One who is calling him out. An interesting change occurs between Isaiah's heavenly vision and the one depicted in Revelation. These living creatures are transformed! They still sing of God's holiness, but they no longer shield themselves from God's glory. In fact, their bodies are covered in eyes. This is the Beatific Vision that Christ has opened up to the whole of creation! Notice also how unlike John was from Isaiah. He was not afraid to gaze at the one seated on the throne! Nor was he afraid of what God was calling him to do. Are you?

Q: As a "man of unclean lips" Isaiah was ashamed to stand in front of God. How might your life/calling cause you to fear to stand before God or to gaze upon God's glory?

Q: In what part of this reading are you able to see the Holy Trinity?

Prayer: Lord God, by your grace you made me worthy to stand in your presence and present myself. Help me today to embrace that gift and share it with others to the glory of your name. Amen.

READ: Romans 8:12-17; Galatians 3:38-4:7; Titus 2:11-3:7

Paul's letter to the Roman Churches is one of the most important letters in the Bible for Christians. In it is where we get most of our doctrine. This particular passage, and the others selected, provides a beautiful detail of how the three beings of God function in unity. Here Paul profoundly states that we have been brought into the relationship that is shared between the Father and the Son. It is the Spirit who has brought us into this loving relationship where we become children of God. Just as we receive an inheritance--an inheritance of glory, which we share with Christ, we must not be surprised if, before sharing the glory, we also share the suffering.

Q: What does it mean to you to receive the Spirit of adoption into God's family?

Q: How does this passage help you see God *for* you, God *with* you, and God *in* you?

Q: Can you define the Holy Trinity in one single sentence?

Prayer: Blessed God, you come to me in many forms but all for the same purpose. Claim me today to be your child, and help me to be faithful so I can share in Christ's glory. Amen.

READ: John 3:1-17; 6:35-40; 1 John 4:1-6

"Very truly, I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit" (v. 5). Nicodemus comes to Jesus secretly and learns a secret that has yet to be revealed anyway in Scripture. Yet Jesus' baptismal imagery is reminiscent of the first few lines of the Bible, where "a wind (Spirit) from God swept over the face of the waters" (Genesis 1:1-2). Just as the Spirit of the Lord hovers over the waters, bringing about a creation, the same is true in baptism; we become a new creation! The Spirit stirs something new within us, and we begin the creative journey of being shaped and formed after the likeness of Christ. Here we see God, three-in-one, at work in the great mystery of our faith.

Q: How are you like Nicodemus? And what questions would you like to ask Jesus?

Q: Nowhere in the bible is the word Trinity mentioned, but how does this passage help you see God *for* you, God *with* you, and God *in* you?

Q: How do you tend to think about baptism? Is it merely a ritual or is it an act of new creation?

Prayer: Grace giving God, you came into my heart and breathed new life into me. Keep your Spirit in me today so that I might stay close to your righteousness and grace. Amen.

Slow Read: Psalm 29

While Isaiah focuses on the sight of God, Psalm 29 focuses on the hearing of God's voice. Read slowly and frequently, and listen to God's voice speaking to you. If we believe Jesus is God's voice then each time we hear God speak, we are encountering Jesus.