

Trinity Sunday 2010

Romans 5: 1-5 "Man's Best Friend is his Dogma"

John 16:12-15

Today is Trinity Sunday. It is the day we focus on one of the basic, foundational theological tenets of Christianity, the Trinity. God is three in one, one God, not divided and yet three persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Different words can be used to describe the work of the trinity... "Creator, Redeemer, Comforter" or "Wisdom, Word, Breath of Life" work nicely because they describe the three-fold work of God. Some people take the interrelationship of God in the Trinity a bit too far with descriptors like "Father/Brother/Lover" or "Mother/Lover/Friend". The Biblical descriptors are Father, Son and Holy Spirit which the church has accepted as the clearest and most accurate description of the Trinity. If the church strays too far from these descriptors it can easily fall into error.

Jesus himself gave us the words that describe the Trinity. He called God, "Father" and taught us to pray, "Our Father who art in heaven". He spoke of God the Spirit as in the text for today from John 16, "When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth..." And he referred to himself as the Son of God when he said, "Believe me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me..." (John 14:11) and in John 3:16 when he said, "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son..." In the upper room with his disciples Jesus told his disciples that he was going to leave them and return to the Father, but was going to send his Spirit, who is also the Spirit of the Father, to counsel, comfort and guide them.

And at Pentecost the Holy Spirit came with power to do just that... counsel, comfort and guide the infant church in its mission to point to Jesus. The texts in the Pentecost season of the church year point to Jesus and help us see how God works in the world as Creator, Redeemer and Comforter. The Pentecost season texts over the summer months, help us learn how to live in the world as God's people. They point us to the power of God which counsels, comforts and guides us in life.

We begin the Pentecost Season of the church year then with a theological reminder of what we believe as Christians. Someone has said that a man's best friend is his dogma. The term "dogma" literally means "belief" or "creed". What you "believe", your "creed" or "dogma" is what will direct your life. It is no accident then that the texts for this Sunday, at the very beginning of the season of Pentecost, deal with the theology of God's continuing activity in

creation, redemption, and sanctification. Because, in order for us to know how to live as the people of God it is vitally important to remember what Xians “believe” about what God has done for us.

Knowing that God stands behind creation is an article of faith. As the psalmist has said, “**The heavens declare the glory of God and the earth shows his handiwork.**” (Ps. 19:1) and “**The fool says in his heart, “There is no God.”**” (Ps. 14:1). Creation speaks the wonder of God. Look around you and you can only wonder at the awesome power of God the creator.

The news this week told of scientists who were able to “create life” in a cell by using computer designed DNA and inserting it in a cell which then replicated itself. While this is an astonishing achievement of science it is far from the awesome power of God to create the world with his Word. God created out of nothing. The scientists used an existing cell and existing DNA then manipulated it to “duplicate” life. It is a remarkable scientific achievement, but I don’t believe it passes the true test of being the “creation of life”. The first article of the Creed describes God as the creator.

The second article of the Creed talks about God the redeemer. The text from Romans 5 speaks of how God has come into the world and saved us in Christ Jesus. “**We are justified by faith, and have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have obtained access to this grace in which we stand.**” We are justified, made right with God, by grace alone through faith alone in Christ Jesus. Lutheran Christians make this the chief article of our faith. Christ came to save sinners.

The coming of Jesus changed the world. Salvation came to the world in Jesus. This “hinge-point” in history changed everything. How shall we live in the world as a result of the coming of Christ? Our theology tells us that God created and sustains life on earth. God came into the world in Jesus to redeem us when we fell into bondage to sin. And God remains with us thru the H.S.

All thru his writing, St. Paul deals with this theology and its practical application to real life. This Epistle lesson is a good example. It enables a person who is undergoing difficulty or pain or adversity in their life, to use their faith, their beliefs or dogma, to give perspective to life’s challenges. It also gives a person a certain "pluck" or "grit" when it comes to dealing with life's challenges. Good theology does that. Good theology is not passive,

bland, wishful thinking. Good theology is real beef that you must chew on but which gives a real substantive perspective on life. It enables a person to look at life from a perspective that is not daunted by the ever-changing circumstances of life. It enables a person, if you will, to rise above the problems of life and to hope in the midst of trouble, set-backs, difficulties and death. Good theology helps one get to higher ground to get your bearings in life and remember where you are going.

Jesus left us his word and his Spirit which still speaks to us to counsel, comfort and guide us in life. The Holy Spirit uses God's word in Scripture as our guide for life. Take the verses from our Epistle text as an example. It is a well known section from Romans 5. Sometimes it is helpful to read something so familiar backwards in order to let it speak to us in a new and refreshing way... Here's Romans 5: 2-5 backwards, "Because the love of God has been poured out for us (in Jesus) we have hope and that hope does not disappoint us but rather empowers us to have character, and character enables endurance in affliction and suffering. Therefore we hope in the Lord and we boast in the glory of God who has justified us by the work of Jesus."

Reading that, letting that word soak into your heart and mind is letting God's word counsel, comfort and guide your life. Troubles come and go but God's love in Christ Jesus is constant. Knowing that, believing that, is letting your dogma be your best friend.

And what you believe, your dogma, produces character. Character makes one brave and strong. You don't develop character on the easy road of life. Character is a by-product of faith in the midst of struggle thru the challenges in life. Persons who have character shaped by faith have values that are above mere expedience. Expedience caves in when challenges arise. Character reacts to challenges with a firm resolve to place one's beliefs and values above expedience.

With faith you can endure affliction and suffering, stress and adversity. The evil one seeks to destroy your faith in God. But Faith holds on to the faithfulness of God. Faith holds on to the promises of God, that God loves the world he created and that God in X Jesus has redeemed you by forgiving your sins in Jesus. Faith holds on to the promise of God to counsel, comfort and guide you through life by the gift of His Holy Spirit. For this we say, Thanks be to God! AMEN.