

HOLY TRINITY SUNDAY

June 7, 2020

ST. PAUL'S LUTHERAN CHURCH, FALLS CHURCH, VA

SERVICE OF WORD AND PRAYER



PRELUDE *Holy, Holy, Holy* Setting: David A. deSilva

WELCOME

ENTRANCE HYMN #507 *Holy, Holy, Holy*

- 1 **Holy, holy, holy! Lord God Almighty!**
Early in the morning our song shall rise to Thee;
Holy, holy, holy, merciful and mighty!
God in three persons, blessed Trinity!
- 2 **Holy, holy, holy! All the saints adore Thee,**
Casting down their golden crowns around the glassy sea;
Cherubim and seraphim falling down before Thee,
Which wert and art and evermore shalt be.
- 3 **Holy, holy, holy! Though the darkness hide Thee,**
Though the eye of sinful man Thy glory may not see,
Only Thou art holy; there is none beside Thee,
Perfect in pow'r, in love, and purity.
- 4 **Holy, holy, holy! Lord God Almighty!**
All Thy works shall praise Thy name in earth and sky and sea.
Holy, holy, holy, merciful and mighty!
God in three persons, blessed Trinity!

CONFESSIO AND ABSOLUTION

In the name of the Father, and of the ✠ Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Amen.

God of all mercy and consolation, come to the aid of your people, turning us from our sin to live for you alone. Give us the power of your Holy Spirit that, attentive to your Word, we may confess our sins, receive your forgiveness, and grow into the fullness of your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Let us confess our sin in the presence of God and of one another.

(Silence for reflection and self-examination)

Gracious God,

have mercy on us. In your compassion forgive us our sins, known and unknown, things done and left undone. Uphold us by your Spirit so that we may live and serve you in newness of life, to the honor and glory of your holy name; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Almighty God have mercy on us, forgive us all our sins through our Lord Jesus Christ, strengthen us in all goodness, and by the power of the Holy Spirit keep us in eternal life. Amen.

KYRIE

In peace let us pray to the Lord:

Lord, have mercy; Christ, have mercy; Lord, have mercy.

For the gift of divine peace and of pardon, with all our heart and with all our mind, let us pray to the Lord:

Lord, have mercy; Christ, have mercy; Lord, have mercy.

For the holy Christian church, here and scattered throughout the world, and for the proclamation of the Gospel and the calling of all to faith, let us pray to the Lord:

Lord, have mercy; Christ, have mercy; Lord, have mercy.

Help, save, comfort and defend us, gracious Lord.

Lord, have mercy; Christ, have mercy; Lord, have mercy.

HYMN OF PRAISE

**To you on high be glory and peace to all the earth;
Goodwill from God in heaven proclaimed at Jesus' birth!
We praise and bless You, Father; Your holy name, we sing –
Our thanks for Your great glory, Lord God our heavenly King.**

**To you, O sole begotten, the Father's Son, we pray;
O Lamb of God, our Savior, You take our sins away.
Have mercy on us, Jesus; receive our heartfelt cry,
Where You in power are seated at God's right hand on high.**

**For You alone are holy; You only are the Lord.
Forever and forever, be worshiped and adored;
You with the Holy Spirit alone are Lord Most High,
In God the Father's glory. "Amen!" our glad reply.**

THE PRAYER OF THE DAY

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Let us pray. Almighty and everlasting God,

You have given us grace to acknowledge the glory of the eternal Trinity by the confession of a true faith and to worship the Unity in the power of the Divine Majesty. Keep us steadfast in this faith and defend us from all adversities; for You, O Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, live and reign, one God, now and forever. Amen.



FIRST LESSON (Be seated) Genesis 1:1–2:3, abbreviated.

In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.

And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. And God saw that the light was good. And God separated the light from the darkness. God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.

And God said, "Let there be an expanse in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters." And God made the expanse and separated the waters that were under the expanse from the waters that were above the expanse. And it was so. And God called the expanse Heaven. And there was evening and there was morning, the second day.

And God said, "Let the waters under the heavens be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear." And it was so. And God said, "Let the earth sprout vegetation, plants yielding seed, and fruit trees bearing fruit in which is their seed, each according to its kind, on the earth." And God saw that it was good. And there was evening and there was morning, the third day.

And God said, "Let there be lights in the expanse of the heavens to separate the day from the night. And let them be for signs and for seasons, and for days and years, and let them be lights in the expanse of the heavens to give light upon the earth." And it was so. And God saw that it was good. And there was evening and there was morning, the fourth day.

And God said, "Let the waters swarm with swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the expanse of the heavens." So God created the great sea creatures and every living creature that moves, with which the waters swarm, according to their kinds, and every winged bird according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. And there was evening and there was morning, the fifth day.

And God said, "Let the earth bring forth living creatures according to their kinds—livestock and creeping things and beasts of the earth according to their kinds." And it was so. Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.

Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. And on the seventh day God finished his work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all his work that he had done. So God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it God rested from all his work that he had done in creation. (ESV)

This is the Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

PSALM 8

O LORD, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth!

You have set your glory above the heavens.

Out of the mouth of babes and infants, you have established strength because of your foes,
to still the enemy and the avenger.

When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers,
the moon and the stars, which you have set in place,
what is man that you are mindful of him,
and the son of man that you care for him?

Yet you have made him a little lower than the heavenly beings
and crowned him with glory and honor.

You have given him dominion over the works of your hands;
you have put all things under his feet,

all sheep and oxen,
and also the beasts of the field,
the birds of the heavens, and the fish of the sea,
whatever passes along the paths of the seas.
O LORD, our Lord,
how majestic is your name in all the earth!

**Glory be to the Father and to the Son
and to the Holy Spirit;
as it was in the beginning,
is now, and will be forever. Amen.**

SECOND LESSON Acts 2:14a, 22–36

Peter, standing with the eleven, lifted up his voice and addressed them, . . . “Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs that God did through him in your midst, as you yourselves know— this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men. God raised him up, loosing the pangs of death, because it was not possible for him to be held by it. For David says concerning him,

“‘I saw the Lord always before me,
for he is at my right hand that I may not be shaken;
therefore my heart was glad, and my tongue rejoiced;
my flesh also will dwell in hope.
For you will not abandon my soul to Hades,
or let your Holy One see corruption.
You have made known to me the paths of life;
you will make me full of gladness with your presence.’

“Brothers, I may say to you with confidence about the patriarch David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. Being therefore a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that he would set one of his descendants on his throne, he foresaw and spoke about the resurrection of the Christ, that he was not abandoned to Hades, nor did his flesh see corruption. This Jesus God raised up, and of that we all are witnesses. Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured out this that you yourselves are seeing and hearing. For David did not ascend into the heavens, but he himself says,

“‘The Lord said to my Lord,
Sit at my right hand,
until I make your enemies your footstool.’

Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified.”

This is the Word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

CHILDREN’S SERMON

ALLELUIA VERSE (Stand)

Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia.

These things are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God.

Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia.

GOSPEL Matthew 28:16–20

The Holy Gospel according to St. Matthew the 28th chapter

Glory to You, O Lord.

Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. And 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, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to You, O Christ

SERMON

Grace, mercy and peace be to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ:

To begin today’s sermon, I thought I’d share some thoughts on why the readings we just read were selected for this day. Today is a unique day in the church year. It is a festival day, and not one suggested to us by a particular event recorded in the scriptures. It is a day, instead, to think about the way God is understood and described by the Christian Church. The Church understands God to be triune – three in one. And we describe God with the related word “Trinity.” Trinity Sunday is therefore about doctrine, as well as the majesty of God, and the mystery of God.

Over the years the church has chosen many different readings to be read on Trinity Sunday. Our Gospel lesson today, from Matthew 28, is one that is commonly chosen, and we can easily see why. Here Jesus explicitly uses the phrase: “*Father, Son and Holy Spirit*” – the only place in scripture, in fact, where this exact formula is used. In this year of reading through Matthew, it is no surprise that we would read this text on this day.

Just so you know, there are some ancient manuscripts of Matthew’s Gospel that do not contain that Trinitarian formula. The words are missing. As a result, there was a time when many scholars questioned the authenticity of these words in the text. But recent scholarship and discoveries have moved us in the direction of affirming them. The words are certainly a very fitting conclusion to the presentation by this Evangelist, and so the internal evidence is strong. Even more, the external evidence keeps growing. In particular, we have discovered just how early the followers of Jesus were using the Trinitarian formula – both in hymnody and in the sacrament of Baptism. Matthew, of course, gives Jesus’ words in the context of a Baptismal command.

You may also know the story of the church’s wrestling with the particulars of the Trinitarian understanding in the 4th and 5th centuries, and the Councils, such as those at Nicaea, which were needed to bring clarity to the church. Lest these be troubling to you, I remind you that the Councils came about after a time when the Trinitarian name was already very clearly established. The Councils were necessitated by false teachers who arose to challenge the church’s teaching. If you have a hymnal

at home – and I will use this time to suggest you should – there is a nice, short write-up about this on the page which introduces the Athanasian Creed.

Today's Old Testament reading – the great story of Creation from the opening chapters of Genesis – was no doubt chosen to correspond with the Gospel reading from Matthew. Its reference to the Spirit of God hovering over the face of the waters is part of this. But its primary connection is the creating itself. In Genesis, the world is made. In Matthew, disciples are being made – or at least the preparations for this are beginning. Note, too, that just as God created the world by speaking it into being, so also God created the Christian movement through a command to his people.

Jesus tells his followers that they are to make disciples, and that these disciples are to come from *all nations*. The message is to go out into the whole world. God's focus is not limited. God's concern is not just a few. God has sent salvation to the whole world in the person of Jesus, just as God created the whole world in the beginning. Indeed, the movement toward the goal of salvation for all can very much be described as a new creation.

And, like the six days of the creation, God's acts of salvation in Jesus are very purposeful. They are seen in Jesus' birth, ministry, death, resurrection, ascension and Spirit-sending. These days in the life of our Savior build on one another until God's good and perfect salvation is complete – just as in the creation of the world.

In our second reading today, Peter makes special note of these great acts of salvation. They are a part of his Pentecost speech, which we continued reading from last Sunday. The mention of these acts of salvation makes for a great connection between this reading and our other two.

Even more, however, reading this text from Acts highlights the fact that our Trinitarian understanding flows very directly from the giving of the Holy Spirit. And it flows very directly from the church's natural reflection upon the life of Jesus as well. Jesus had told his disciples that the Spirit would lead them into all truth. Peter, in his speech to the gathered peoples on Pentecost, rehearsed the important facts of Jesus' life so that they would know the truth of his message.

It is no doubt because of these strong connections that our Lutheran synod has decided that we will now read this Acts text every year on Trinity Sunday. This is a change. And it seems to be a very good one.

In looking at this Acts text more closely, we see that Peter begins by saying that Jesus was "delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God." I will remind you that this use of the word "*delivered*" is heard by us on Good Friday, where we repeat the refrain: "He was *delivered* up to death; He was *delivered* for the sins of the people." Peter's words also echo those of Jesus himself, who said to the disciples in his last weeks of ministry: "See, we are going up to Jerusalem. And the Son of Man will be *delivered* over to the chief priests and scribes, and they will condemn him to death" (Mt. 20:18).

Yes, Jesus would be delivered to his fate by the actions of many people. But Peter emphasizes here that Jesus was in fact delivered by God himself. He was delivered "*according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God.*" None of the actions of men would take place without God's directing. God would accomplish his salvation, through men's choices, as he planned.

Peter goes on to tell that Jesus was crucified. And yet God raised him from the dead and exalted him at the right hand of God. This was all done in keeping with God's promise to the great king David, who wrote in the Psalms about God's salvation through one of his descendants.

Peter then shares how the Father has given Jesus the Spirit, and that the Spirit flows from Jesus. The people could in fact see the Spirit being poured out that very day! We, reading these words of Peter, note how very Trinitarian the language is here—all three persons of the Trinity being mentioned in the same sentence.

Peter concludes with a strong statement about Jesus' identity, saying: "Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made him both *Lord and Christ*." Peter believes, teaches and confesses that Jesus is not simply a man like them, but is of God. He is *Lord* – having the same authority and status as God. And he is *Christ* – the one sent by God to rule and save his people.

In the Christian Church, we speak very specifically about Jesus' identity and his relationship to God in our theological statements. In particular, the Athanasian Creed goes into great detail to describe the relationship between Father, Son and Holy Spirit. We normally recite this Creed on Trinity Sunday, and we will do so this again this year – but only parts of it this time. You can read the rest of it on your own.

Instead of more time on the Creed, I want to say something about the demonstrating that is going on in our country right now as a result of the unjust deaths of a number of African Americans. As I write this sermon, the demonstrating and protesting has devolved into rioting, destruction and looting. These are scary images. And upsetting. For many of us, these actions seem way over the top and frankly unhelpful. But of course, that is only one perspective... and not shared by all.

What we can all say for sure is that these actions come from a place of frustration. Deep frustration. We should acknowledge this frustration. And be concerned about it.

Frustration comes in part because racist acts take place far too often in this country. And because racist attitudes continue. And because people in power far too often abuse their power and authority.

And none of us is completely innocent of guilt when it comes to these things. We have all sinned in these ways – either by what we have done or by what we have left undone. We need to own our sin. And repent of it.

In a few moments we will say parts of the Athanasian Creed. I've included a line from that Creed which gives a beautiful description of the equality inherent in the Godhead. That line can be lifted up as a lesson for the equality of humanity too. You'll see what I mean.

Let me add too, that it's also important for us to think about the use of strong words when confronting injustice. Yes, the scriptures will mostly suggest using gentleness and grace in our speech. But there are times when more direct language is used too. In the Acts text today, Peter used one particularly strong word. Notice he didn't just say "Jesus was crucified." He said to the people "*you*" crucified Jesus. He made it personal. And he said it twice. His words were meant to provoke.

Most of us know that these particular words have had some sad consequences through the centuries. But at their root, the words were simply meant to catch the attention of the people. And to hold up a truth they needed to hear.

Our reading from Acts today ended after Peter's second use of that statement. If we were to continue reading, we would hear that the people did not take offense, but rather took his words to heart. They cried out, "What shall we do?"

Peter had an answer. "*Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself.*"

Peter called the people to the important work of repentance, which was not an easy thing to do. But Peter did this having also at one point referred to the people as his "brothers." By doing this he identified with them and pointed out their commonality. Peter, after all, had sinned too.

Peter then shared with them the comforting words of the Gospel – the promise and hope of the forgiveness of sins. With sins forgiven, they would receive the gift of the Holy Spirit to sanctify their lives, increase their understanding and bring them together in the mission of God to save the world.

Next Sunday we will start reading again from earlier sections of Matthew's Gospel – beginning with chapter 9 where Jesus calls us to think about the need for workers in his kingdom. This reading will set the tone for the weeks ahead as we think about our work in the kingdom.

Let me conclude today by simply reminding you that our mission of disciple-making, given us by our Lord Jesus, and demonstrated by Peter, is not just to have people wear the label of Christian or just agree with its teachings, but to hear the message and live it – specifically, God's call to repentance and the acceptance of His forgiveness.

May God therefore lead you in the repentance you need, and may He build you up through the power and forgiveness given in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

HYMN OF THE DAY #498 Come, Holy Ghost, Creator Blest

- 1 **Come, Holy Ghost, Creator blest,
And make our hearts Your place of rest;
Come with Your grace and heav'nly aid,
And fill the hearts which You have made.**
- 2 **To You, the Counselor, we cry,
To You, the gift of God Most High;
The fount of life, the fire of love,
The soul's anointing from above.**
- 3 **In You, with graces sevenfold,
We God's almighty hand behold
While You with tongues of fire proclaim
To all the world His holy name.**
- 4 **Your light to ev'ry thought impart,
And shed Your love in ev'ry heart;
The weakness of our mortal state
With deathless might invigorate.**

- 5 **Drive far away our wily foe,
And Your abiding peace bestow;
With You as our protecting guide,
No evil can with us abide.**
- 6 **Teach us to know the Father, Son,
And You, from both, as Three in One
That we Your name may ever bless
And in our lives the truth confess.**
- 7 **Praise we the Father and the Son
And Holy Spirit, with them One,
And may the Son on us bestow
The gifts that from the Spirit flow! Amen.**

ATHANASIAN CREED

We worship one God in Trinity and Trinity in Unity, neither confusing the persons nor dividing the substance.

For the Father is one person, the Son is another, and the Holy Spirit is another. But the Godhead of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit is one: the glory equal, the majesty coeternal.

Such as the Father is, such is the Son, and such is the Holy Spirit: The Father uncreated, the Son uncreated, the Holy Spirit uncreated; The Father infinite, the Son infinite, the Holy Spirit infinite; The Father eternal, the Son eternal, the Holy Spirit eternal. And yet there are not three Eternals, but one Eternal, just as there are not three Uncreated or three Infinities, but one Uncreated and one Infinite.

The Father is not made nor created nor begotten by anyone. The Son is neither made nor created but begotten of the Father alone. The Holy Spirit is of the Father and of the Son, neither made nor created nor begotten, but proceeding.

Thus, there is one Father, not three Fathers; one Son, not three Sons; one Holy Spirit, not three Holy Spirits. And in this Trinity none is before or after another; none is greater or less than another; but the whole three persons are coeternal with each other and coequal, so that in all things, as has been stated above, the Trinity in Unity and Unity in Trinity is to be worshiped.

OFFERING *God the Father, Be Our Stay* Setting: Allan Mahnke

PRAYERS OF THE CHURCH

O blessed and holy Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, hear the prayers of Your people and grant us all things according to Your great mercy:

Brief silence

In the beginning, great Father, You spoke and all things came to be. Help us to see the imprint of Your love in the goodness of creation and to care for this good earth as Your stewards. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Throughout the ages, Father, Your Spirit filled the world with hope and called us to repentance and faith. Help us to hear You speaking to us in Your Word and Your people, and to respond with faith, confessing You as Lord of all. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Stir up the hearts of Your people, O Lord, to answer Your call and serve as pastors, teachers and church workers. Bless those who serve with strength for their mission and trust in Your goodness. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

In Baptism, You joined us to our Savior's death and resurrection, dear Father. Help us to live as Your baptized people, who offer our hearts and lives to serve You in these later days. Look with special mercy upon the city of Minneapolis and especially upon those who grieve the senseless killing of George Floyd. Heal the racial divisions in our land and teach us anew that we are all Your children. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Bless us and this good Land, gracious Father. Guide our leaders to do what is right and good for even the weakest ones; bless all who serve us as health, safety and law enforcement workers and keep them from all harm. Help us live each of these pandemic days with our neighbor's well being at the center of all that we say and do. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

In the hour of trial and in the moment of trouble, You are always near, kind Father. Hear us as we cry to You for the sake of the sick, the troubled, the wounded and those who grieve [*especially* _____]. Restore them and heal them according to Your good will. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Father, in the blessed Supper Your Son offers us His body as the bread of heaven and His blood as the cup of salvation. We long for the day when we can once more receive this blessed food to nourish and strengthen us for life in the midst of death. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Gracious and Blessed Trinity, we rejoice in the beauty of Your Godhead and the marvels of Your mighty arm by which You guard and keep us. Stir us to greater zeal as we behold Your mercy in the lives of those saints who have gone before us, especially Barnabas and Boniface. Bring us at last to dwell with them in Your presence forevermore.

All these things and whatever else You know we need, grant to us for the sake of our Savior Jesus Christ, through whom, with whom and in whom, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, all honor and glory are Yours, almighty Father, both now and forever. **Amen.**

THE LORD'S PRAYER

**Our Father who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name,
Thy kingdom come,
Thy will be done on earth
as it is in heaven;
give us this day our daily bread;
and forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those
who trespass against us;
and lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom
and the power and the glory
forever and ever. Amen.**

BENEDICTION

The Lord bless us and keep us.
The Lord make His face shine on us and be gracious to us.
The Lord look upon us with favor and ✠ give us peace.

SENDING HYMN #506 Glory Be to God the Father

- 1 **Glory be to God the Father,
 Glory be to God the Son,
Glory be to God the Spirit:
 Great Jehovah, Three in One!
 Glory, glory
 While eternal ages run!**

- 2 **Glory be to Him who loved us,
 Washed us from each spot and stain;
Glory be to Him who bought us,
 Made us kings with Him to reign!
 Glory, glory
 To the Lamb that once was slain!**

- 3 **Glory to the King of angels,
 Glory to the Church's King,
Glory to the King of nations;
 Heav'n and earth, your praises bring!
 Glory, glory
 To the King of glory sing!**

- 4 **Glory, blessing, praise eternal!
 Thus the choir of angels sings;
Honor, riches, pow'r, dominion!
 Thus its praise creation brings.
 Glory, glory,
 Glory to the King of kings!**

ANNOUNCEMENTS

DISMISSAL

Go in peace. Serve the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

POSTLUDE Glory Be to God the Father Setting: Jim Vyhanek

Acknowledgments

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