The Holy Trinity Johns 3:1-17
May 30, 2021 195-278-241/277-334

The Triune God Is Our Savior God
I. We are loved by God the Father.
II. We are saved by God the Son.
III. We are reborn by God the Holy Spirit.

Dear Christian friends,

***"How can these things be?"*** Nicodemus asked Jesus. As we today focus on the teaching that **God is triune** we ECHO Nicodemus' question. **How** can God be three separate Persons yet one God? I hope you read the **Athanasian Creed** as the bulletin suggested. "WE WORSHIP one God in three Persons and three Persons in one God. The Father is God, the Son is God, the Holy Spirit is God; yet they are **not three Gods**, but one God." That makes no sense! The Bible CLEARLY TEACHES this truth but never tries to explain ***"how can this be?"***

THREE TIMES Jesus here tells Nicodemus, ***"Amen, Amen, I tell you."*** The doctrine of the **Holy Trinity** – the truth of the **gospel** – are WAY BEYOND our understanding. The only way we know this is **because** God has revealed it to us in His Word.

In this conversation between Jesus and Nicodemus we learn that the TRIUNE GOD IS OUR SAVIOR GOD. 1)We are loved by God the **Father**, 2) we are saved by God the **Son** and 3)we are reborn by God the **Holy Spirit**.

**I. We are loved by God the Father.**

There is only ONE REAL, TRUE God. Through Isaiah God declares, ***"There is no God apart from Me, a righteous God and Savior; there is none but Me."*** The very first commandment ORDERS us, ***"You shall have no other gods."*** It does make a difference **what God** a person worships. Our money may declare, "In God we trust" – but WHICH GOD are we trusting? The god of the Moslems – the **Mormons** – the **Jehovah's Witnesses** – the generic god of American culture – OR the triune God revealed in the Bible?

The triune God has MANY ATTRIBUTES or **characteristics**. He is a spirit – He has **no body**. He is eternal – He has **no beginning** or end – He ALWAYS IS. God knows **everything** – He is everywhere – He is almighty – ***"nothing is impossible with God."***

We can see those attributes in **creation**. Look at the world God **made for us**! Sure, it's no longer **perfect** but it's still amazing! Could YOU have thought up the **countless varieties** of birds, flowers, fish, etc.? Could YOU have made a human being and **gotten it right** the first time? And GOD DID that just by saying, ***"Let there be!"***

As fantastic and amazing as all that is ABOVE THAT ALL is that ***"God is love."*** Or in those oh-so-familiar words, ***"God so loved the world."***

We are loved by God the **Father**. SOME people question God's love. Some have become **downright** BITTER and **angry** toward God. PERHAPS as we've gone through the **wringer** of life's pains and problems we've also wondered, "Does God REALLY love me? CAN God really love me?" ***"God so loved the world."***

What did GOD SEE **in us** that makes Him ***"so love"*** us? God didn't see CUTE little children – "Aren't they so adorable?" God saw EACH ONE of us **in all our sin** - our rebellion – defiance – **disobedience**. AS OUR CREATOR God has every right to **tell us how** to live our lives. God has done just that with His 10 Commandments. EVERY PART of our daily lives – the TV shows and movies we watch – our personal morals and **values** – the language we use – how we treat and talk about other people –

EVERY MINUTE and **every area** – are to reflect the fact that our CREATOR God is also the HOLY God. ***"Be holy, for I the LORD your God am holy."***

**God loving** us doesn't mean God IGNORES or shrugs off our sin with an "Oh, well." Go back to that OT reading. Isaiah saw God ***"seated on a throne, high and exalted."*** He saw the holy seraphim covering themselves in HUMBLE REVERENCE before God. He heard them cry, ***"Holy, holy, holy!"*** He felt the thresholds ***"shake"*** and saw ***"the temple filled with smoke."*** Isaiah's response was NOT – "WOW! This is really neat!" ***"I am doomed! I am ruined, because I am a man with unclean lips, and …my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of Armies!"*** Because of **our sin** our HOLY CREATOR God had every right to **make our lives** now a LIVING HELL and the banish us **forever** to hell's punishment. The better we understand that the MORE WE'LL CLING to those familiar words, ***"For God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son"*** to be our Savior.

**II. We are saved by God the Son.**

Jesus is the **eternal, almighty Son** of God – TRUE GOD with the Father and the Holy Spirit. That man sitting **in front** of Nicodemus and talking with him is GOD HIMSELF! Jesus here calls Himself ***"the Son of Man."*** The triune God is FULL OF MIRACLES – including that the **eternal Son** of God was born a true FLESH-AND-BLOOD man.

Jesus came here on a RESCUE MISSION. Since Nicodemus was a ***"teacher of Israel"*** and WELL-VERSED in the OT Jesus explained His mission by pointing Nicodemus back to an OT example. ***"Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, so that everyone who believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life."***

The OT Israelites were once again grumbling and **complaining**. With their complaining they were accusing God of **doing a lousy job** taking care of them - they DESERVED BETTER than what they had. God didn't take that SITTING DOWN. God punished their **sin of complaining** with death – **death** BY **poisonous snakes**. We may like to MAKE EXCUSES for our sins or argue they're **no big deal**. But go walk around a cemetery. That's God's judgment on our sin.

Those snakes accomplished their **purpose**. The Israelites HONESTLY confessed their sin and HUMBLY asked for God's **forgiveness**. Then God gave Moses a STRANGE ORDER. Moses was to make a **brass snake** and put it up on a pole in the middle of the camp. God PROMISED that anyone who was bitten by a snake and THEN LOOKED at that **fake snake** would not die but live. The Israelites were saved from a CERTAIN DEATH by trusting **God's promise** and looking to that brass snake.

Now Jesus explains that SOMETHING EVEN GREATER than that was **about to happen**. GREATER **because** it wasn't just FOR SOME people but for the **whole world**. GREATER because it would save people **not from** PHYSICAL DEATH but eternal death in hell. **Greater** because not a hunk of metal but the BLOODIED BODY of the ***"beloved Son"*** of God would be ***"lifted up."*** Jesus is taking us to His cross, isn't He? There the innocent Jesus was ***"lifted up"*** to save us from sin and hell. There the sinless Son of God died as ***"the Lamb of God"*** to ***"take away the sin of the world."*** On the cross Jesus sacrificed His holy life – shed His precious blood – to PERSONALLY PAY for all sins of **all people** of **all time**.

Jesus DID ALL that so that ***"everyone who believes in Him may have eternal life."*** TRUSTING in Jesus – and ONLY BY trusting in Jesus – do we have God's forgiveness of all our sins. RELYING on Jesus – LOOKING to Jesus – God promises us **eternal life** in heaven the moment we die. Allah – Buddha – the countless gods and goddesses of the Hindus – the **nameless** GRAND ARCHITECT of the universe – CAN'T SAVE anyone. The triune God is the ONLY REAL God and the ONLY SAVIOR God. Whoever believes in Jesus – ONLY THOSE who believe in Jesus – ***"shall not perish but have eternal life."***

Nicodemus came to Jesus **because** he was IMPRESSED by the miracles Jesus had been doing. But being impressed by Jesus is NOT THE SAME as **believing/trusting** in Jesus. Saving faith is NOT ADMIRING Jesus as a **wonderful person** but RELYING ON Jesus as your Lord and Savior.

**III. We are reborn by God the Holy Spirit.**

Nicodemus was a ***"Pharisee."*** He actually thought he was GOOD ENOUGH to get into heaven **on his own**. Jesus shattered that thinking with a solemn warning. ***"Amen, Amen, I tell you: Unless someone is born from above, he cannot see the kingdom of God."*** Jesus spelled it out even MORE BLUNTLY. ***"Amen, Amen, I tell you: Unless someone is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God! Whatever is born of the flesh is flesh. Whatever is born of the Spirit is spirit."*** Jesus shoves the DAMNING TRUTH of **Original Sin** in our faces. Sinful parents have sinful children. Ever since Adam and Eve fell into sin we're all born **sinful** with a sinful nature that **hates** God. We were not born LITTLE ANGELS but ***"dead in sin – by nature objects of God's wrath."*** We all need to be ***"born again/from above"*** – REBORN – made totally new people – SPIRITUALLY ALIVE people.

We are reborn by God the **Holy Spirit**. He does that for us THROUGH the **sacrament** of Holy Baptism. Baptism "is NOT JUST PLAIN WATER but water used by **God's** command and connected with **God's** Word." Baptism is not something WE DO **for God** but God the Holy Spirit working **on us**. Oh, we can't separate baptism FROM JESUS. Jesus commands us to baptize and baptism is based on Jesus' work. Paul explained Holy Baptism with these words, ***"(God) saved us through the washing of rebirth and the renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that, having been justified by His grace, we might become heirs in keeping with the hope of eternal life."***

Every week as you come to church look at that baptismal font and rejoice in what **God the Holy Spirit** ALL DID FOR YOU when you were baptized. THERE IN HOLY BAPTISM the Holy Spirit brought you to faith in Jesus – washed away all your sins in Jesus' blood – clothed you with Jesus' perfect life – there He MADE YOU a child of God and an heir of eternal life in heaven. Treasure your baptism as a precious gift from your **triune** God. LIVE your baptism **every day** AS YOU LIVE as a dear child of God and not as an **unbeliever**.

We were baptized ***"in the name"*** of the TRIUNE God – ***"in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit."*** Don't worry about HOW God can **be triune**. Just rejoice and ever be grateful that the **triune** God is also YOUR SAVIOR God. Amen.

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