

The Holy Trinity: Father, Son, And Holy Spirit.

Text: Matt 3:13-17

Suggested Hymns:

136, 802 LSB, 141, 140, 643

1) The Revelation Of The Trinity

2) The Mystery Of The Trinity

3) The Blessings Of The Trinity

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is Matthew 3:13–17, *¹³ Then Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan to be baptized by him. ¹⁴ And John tried to prevent Him, saying, “I need to be baptized by You, and are You coming to me?” ¹⁵ But Jesus answered and said to him, “Permit it to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.” Then he allowed Him.*

¹⁶ When He had been baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened to Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting upon Him. ¹⁷ And suddenly a voice came from heaven, saying, “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” (NKJV)

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

Today is known as Trinity Sunday. This festival divides, as it were, the church-year into two parts. The first is called the festival half of the year. It extends from Advent to Trinity and comprises the high festivals of the Church, the days which tell of Jesus’ coming, birth, epiphany, suffering, death, resurrection, ascension, and of His sending the Holy Spirit. The Christian is to live this part of the year with Jesus by commemorating in a worthy manner these memorable events in the life of Jesus.

We have just again passed through this part of the church-year and have arrived at the beginning of the last half, which is devoted to the teachings of Jesus.

Thus the festival of the Trinity serves to conclude the first and to open for us the second half of the church-year. To bind these two halves together the Church has selected the very comprehensive doctrine of the Holy Trinity.

Today's text speaks of the Holy Trinity: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit and tells us of the revelation of the Trinity, of the mystery of the Trinity, and of the blessings of the Trinity. May the Lord bless our meditation.

1. The Revelation Of The Trinity

In our text the Trinity is revealed to us; for the First Person, the Father, makes His presence known by speaking from heaven and testifying of Jesus, the Son of Mary: *"This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."*

The Second Person, the Son of God, reveals Himself standing visibly in the waters of the Jordan River, being baptised of John; while the Third Person, the Holy Spirit, reveals Himself in the form of a dove, descending from heaven and alighting upon Jesus.

What a glorious and impressive revelation of the Holy Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit! But that is by no means the only revelation which God has given us of the three persons of the Godhead.

In many places of Holy Scripture we hear of these three persons in the one and only true God.

In Creation. The Father, the First Person, spoke the Word. The Word, the Second Person, was the One through whom all things were made, namely, the Lord Jesus Christ, who became incarnate and whose glory the apostles saw in the flesh and we see in the Word, Jesus of Nazareth.¹ And of the Holy Spirit we read in the sacred record of Creation: *And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.*²

Again, in Num. 6:22-26 we read that God commanded Moses to tell Aaron, the high priest, to bless the children of Israel in the name of the Three Persons, calling each one Lord. Thus all blessings were to come to God's people through that Triune God who is three in person, but one in essence.

From that time, about three thousand years ago, till today we still by this very benediction which we pronounce, teach and acknowledge the Triune God, for we also say: ²⁴ *"The LORD bless you and keep you;* ²⁵ *The LORD make His*

face shine upon you, And be gracious to you; ²⁶The LORD lift up His countenance upon you, And give you peace.”³

In the Psalms these three persons are mentioned. For instance, in Psalm 2:7 the Father and the Son are mentioned. In Psalm 45 the Son of God is exalted as the Bridegroom of the Church. Likewise in Psalm 72 and in Psalm 110 He is mentioned. The Holy Spirit is mentioned by the sweet psalmist of Israel in 2 Sam. 23:2.

Isaiah also in telling of his vision of God testifies that the one Lord was acclaimed by the threefold cry of holy, holy, holy in Isaiah 6:3 as we heard in the Old Testament Lesson.

At the very beginning of the New Testament, in the first chapter of Matthew, there is a revelation of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit in Matthew 1:18-25 describing the birth of Jesus.

It would take too long to quote all the passages of the New Testament where Jesus speaks of the Father and, again, speaks of the Holy Spirit as different persons from Himself.

Jesus prays to the Father, *“not My will, but Yours, be done,”⁴* and He declares of the Holy Spirit, *“But when the Comforter comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth.”⁵*

Indeed, this doctrine of the Holy Trinity is so clearly revealed in holy Scripture, so positively and unmistakably taught, that no one can enter the Christian Church who does not know it and accept it, for at the very portals of the Christian Church, the Sacrament by which we enter it, namely Holy Baptism, is to be performed in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, that is, in the name of the Triune God.⁶

St. Paul also in his letters refers to this doctrine, for example, he concludes his Second Epistle to the Corinthians with the words of 2 Corinthians 13:14, *“The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.”*

There is therefore no excuse for any one deceiving himself by thinking that it is sufficient to acknowledge that there is a God, some God. The one and only true God has clearly revealed Himself as the Triune God, Father, Son, and Holy

Spirit; and only those people worship the true God who worship this Holy Trinity.

But all those people who do not believe in this divine revelation and do not worship the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, three persons in one being, are not Christians, but are idolaters.

God does not ask us to have our own imaginations concerning Him; but He has shown Himself clearly here in the text and in many other places that we might know Him, the only true God, love Him, serve Him, and worship Him. Therefore we sing the *Gloria Patri* and the *Gloria in Excelsis*; and therefore we confess the three Articles of the Apostles' Creed.

2. The Mystery Of The Trinity

But are there not some difficulties connected with this doctrine? How can there be one being and yet three persons? Indeed, this doctrine of the Triune God is a most mysterious teaching, far beyond our natural understanding or comprehension.

Something of this appears also here in our text. Here the Father reveals Himself by a voice coming from heaven. He declares concerning that man Jesus standing there in the water: ***“This is My beloved Son.”*** Is this not a mystery? Is it not far, far, above our understanding?

And the mystery is by no means removed, but rather increased, when we hear that there is a Third Person in union with this Father and Son, and that He shows Himself here in the form of a dove, alighting upon the Son of God.

As in simple faith we gaze upon this revelation of the Triune God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, we exclaim with Paul in Romans 11:33–36, ³³ ***Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out!*** ³⁴ ***“For who has known the mind of the LORD? Or who has become His counselor?”*** ³⁵ ***“Or who has first given to Him And it shall be repaid to him?”*** ³⁶ ***For of Him and through Him and to Him are all things, to whom be glory forever.***

There are those whom this mystery offends. They hesitate to accept the revelation because the mystery seems to them too great. But what is more natural than that God's being should be a mystery to us?

In the first place, our own being is a mystery. And then here is the world and the heavens with their myriad of stars. There is that wonderful sun with its light and heat burning for thousands of years, the source of whose fire no scientist or philosopher has ever been able to explain.

In ourselves the union between spirit and body — what a mystery! On every hand those who are not dull, stupid, or arrogant must, as they see, hear, and contemplate the marvels of God's creation, exclaim with the Psalmist, ²⁴ *O LORD, how manifold are Your works! In wisdom You have made them all. The earth is full of Your possessions.*⁷

And again, ¹ *O LORD, our Lord, How excellent is Your name in all the earth, Who have set Your glory above the heavens!* ³ *When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, The moon and the stars, which You have ordained,* ⁴ *What is man that You are mindful of him, And the son of man that You visit him?*⁸

And again, ¹ *The heavens declare the glory of God; And the firmament shows His handiwork.*⁹

God who has created all these things, who has given to the stars their course and to the sea its power, and who holds the great oceans in the hollow of His hand, who has ordained the seasons of the year, before whom the mightiest men of this earth, the greatest intellects and the men of highest power are but dust and ashes — is it strange that there is a mystery in Him, in His being?

Why refuse His definite, clear, unmistakable revelation and Word when out in nature the works of His hands baffle all attempts at explanation?

The only wise course for us to pursue is to take the advice of our Good Shepherd and, when facing this mystery of the Trinity as we have it here in the text, become again as little children, so that with child-like faith we may accept what our heavenly Father tells us in His Word.

Indeed, we ought to be thankful that God deals with us as with children. He offers us the deepest and greatest mysteries, not that we should solve them, but that we should believe them upon the testimony of His own truthful Word.

Let us stand in awe of God whose very creation fills us with awe, wonder, and admiration. Let us cast down our foolish imaginations and every high thing

that exalts itself against the knowledge of God and bring into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.

Indeed, may our hearts at all times be ready to join in that sacred hymn to the Triune God: —

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!¹⁰

3. The Blessings Of The Trinity

The hymn just quoted does not only speak of the Trinity, but of the blessed Trinity. And that is the third thing to which our text calls attention, namely, the blessings of the Holy Trinity.

The revelation of the mystery of the Trinity which we find here in our text is not offered to us simply to fill us with consternation and to impress us with the incomprehensible nature of God, but it is offered to us that we may be made partakers of those blessings which the Triune God wishes to bestow upon us.

Listen to what the Father declares. He says of Jesus: ***“This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.”*** He thereby declares to us all that the Father is the One who is pleased in all that the Son does for us; for we know that this Jesus came into the world for us, not that He should be ministered to, but that He should minister and give His life a ransom for many.

In other words, the Father here reveals Himself as that God of whom Jesus said in John 3:16, ***“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.”*** The Father here reveals Himself as the One of whom Jesus said: ***“He who has seen Me has seen the Father,”***¹¹ the God of mercy, truth, and love, who has provided for us the Saviour, of whom the Scripture declares that God is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance — our Creator indeed, but also the One who draws us to the Son, and through the Son to heaven.

And here you see the Lord Jesus, the Son of God, the Second Person in the Trinity being baptised by John. He declares that He wishes to fulfil all

righteousness. We know that He did not have to do this for Himself. He had an immutable, eternal righteousness and needed no other.

But we know why He is called Jesus; because He would save His people from their sins.¹² We know why He came to this earth. He came not to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance.¹³ This is the Jesus of whom John the Baptist, who was baptising Him, said: ***“Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world.”***¹⁴

This is the Jesus of whom not only one or two, but all true prophets of all times, countries, and languages have testified the same thing.¹⁵ O the unsearchable riches of Christ which we find in Jesus for time and for eternity!¹⁶

Here we hear of the blessings of the Holy Spirit. He is shown in the form of a dove because through the Gospel the Holy Spirit brings peace to us from heaven, from the highest court, from that Judge from whose sentence no one can appeal, who decides, and the matter is decided forever.

God gives us power to become the sons of God, to believe in our Saviour, and through whose holy inspiration the Triune God enters our heart, lives and dwells there; of whom we say in the Third Article: *“who daily and richly forgives all my sins and the sins of all believers. On the Last Day He will raise me and all the dead, and give eternal life to me and all believers in Christ.”*

Through the water and the Spirit in Holy Baptism, which is mentioned here in our text, the Holy Spirit has entered our hearts, made us children of God, is through the Word of God preserving us in faith, and will finally through faith give us the victory over sin, death, and the devil.

Let us close with the words of the hymnist,¹⁷

Glory be to God the Father,
Glory be to God the Son,
Glory be to God the Spirit:
Everlasting three in one. Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep our hearts and minds, in Christ Jesus. Amen.

¹ John 1:3

² Genesis 1:2

³ Numbers 6:24–26

⁴ Luke 22:42

⁵ John 15:26

⁶ Matthew 28:19

⁷ Psalm 104:24

⁸ Psalm 8:1, 3-4

⁹ Psalm 19:1

¹⁰ Hymn 140 v 4

¹¹ John 14:9

¹² Matt. 1:21

¹³ Matt. 9:13b

¹⁴ John 1:29

¹⁵ Acts 10:43

¹⁶ Cf. 2 Cor. 5:15–21; Matt. 11:28

¹⁷ Hymn 643