

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

Trinity Sunday

May 30, 2010

Prince of Peace Lutheran Church

Hecla, SD

Text: 1 Peter 1:1-9

Theme: REJOICE GREATLY IN THE TRIUNE GOD!

- He chose you from eternity
- He has begotten you in time
- He keeps you to the end

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

Augustine was one of the great Christian minds of the early church. He lived about 300 years after Jesus ascended into heaven. The story is told of Augustine that one day he was walking on the beach contemplating the teaching of the Trinity. He was, as we hope to do today, reflecting on the fact that Scripture clearly teaches that there is only one God, but that this one God has revealed Himself as three separate, but equal persons - God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. The story goes that as Augustine was walking along the shore he came upon a young boy digging a ditch in the sand. When Augustine asked this boy what he hoped to accomplish with his ditch, the boy replied, "I want to empty the sea into my ditch!" Augustine came to realize that he was trying to do the same thing by trying to fit the hugeness of the Triune God into his little brain.

It is hard for our minds to understand how there can be three Persons - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit - but only one God. To our minds it would make more sense to say that there are three Gods since there are three Persons. Then we think, creeds like the Athanasian (which we will use later in our service) would be much simpler. But God is much bigger than our minds, isn't He. He does not do things that only makes sense to our minds. His ways are higher than our ways and His thoughts are higher than ours. To try to fit the Triune God into our little brains is like trying to dig a hole for the ocean to drain into.

The Triune God wants us to know Him in a real personal way. Thus He has revealed Himself to us through His Word. He has revealed that He is One God, but three Persons. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are three persons, but one God. They are all equal in majesty and power. None is greater, none is less. Three-in-One, One-in-Three.

This teaching of the Trinity is one that we may struggle with from time to time as we, like Augustine, try to fit the ocean of God into the small ditch of our minds. But when we examine it under the light of Scripture we see that is a most blessed teaching. Let us then on this Trinity Sunday examine God's Word and rejoice greatly in the Triune God. Let us rejoice greatly as we hear how He has chosen us from eternity, begotten us in time, and promises to keep us to the end. To guide our discussion this morning we turn to Peter's first epistle, chapter one, beginning with the first verse. Please rise for the reading of the text:

Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the pilgrims of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in

sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace be multiplied. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ, whom having not seen you love. Though now you do not see Him, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, receiving the end of your faith – the salvation of your souls.

So far the Word of God.

HE CHOSE YOU IN ETERNITY

Your parents love you, right? But they did not chose you to be their child. You were the child God gave them. Still their love is quite strong for you. However, when someone adopts a child, those parents chose that boy or girl to be their very own. Out of all the orphaned children in the world, these parents chose that child, brought that child into their home, fed and clothed that child, and called him or her son or daughter. That child should never stop thanking that husband and wife for bringing him or her into their family and loving him or her as if it were their own child by birth.

We begin then to see the great love the Triune God has lavished on us when we hear in verse two of our text that Christians are *“elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ.”* In this verse we learn how each person of the God-head was active in choosing us. First we hear that we were elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father. In Ephesians 1 we learn that this foreknowledge of God does not simply go to the time before we were born, but all the way back to before the heavens and the earth were created. Think of that! Before “in the beginning” God the Father in His infinite foreknowledge chose you to be His child! He elected you and predestined you to be His son.

God the Holy Spirit was also active in this election, this choosing of you. It is the Spirit who would set you apart from a dying and unbelieving world unto God. This is the sanctification of the Spirit that Peter writes of. As the elect the Spirit would set you aside for God’s holy purposes. This would be done by the Spirit bringing you to faith. This is the obedience that is spoken of. Obedience to the Gospel, obedience of faith - believing in the Gospel and in Jesus Christ as Savior.

But this election could not have been done without God the Son. It is only by the blood of the Son of God that we could ever be brought into the household of God. Isaiah writes, *“Your iniquities have separated you from your God; And your sins have hidden His face from you.”* (Is 59:2) Our sin ruined our relationship with the Triune God. The only way that the Father would chose to adopt us as sons is if we were first cleansed. And that is where the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ comes in. For *“without shedding of blood there is no remission.”* (Heb 9:22b) John writes in his first epistle, *“the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.”* (1 Jn 1:7b) Only the blood of the Son of God was precious enough to cleanse and purify us from the filth of our sin.

So you see, all the way from eternity the Triune God was determined to save you by choosing you to be a child of God. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit were all involved in different ways but they were all working as one to chose you from eternity. Rejoice greatly in the Triune God who chose you!

BEGOTTEN IN TIME

From eternity we move to the time in which we live today. We were to our parents born with physical life - that is our hearts were beating, our lungs were breathing, our brains were active. Though we emerged from our mother's womb alive and kicking, each one of us was born spiritually dead. Our spiritual hearts were not beating with the love for God and our neighbor, our spiritual lungs were not breathing praises to God, nor were our spiritual brains contemplating the glory of God and keeping His commandments. Just the opposite. We were dead in our trespasses and sins. We were born sinners, just like our parents were, and their parents tracing all the way back to Adam and Eve. As Jesus told Nicodemus, "***That which is born of flesh is flesh.***" (Jn 3:6) The only thing a sinful father and a sinful mother can reproduce is a sinful child. And a child of sin, our future was bleak and dark, full of judgment and God's wrath.

But rejoice greatly in the Triune God! He had other plans. From eternity He chose you to be His child and in time you were begotten again to a living hope! Verses 3 and 4, "***Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ form the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you.***" Though born spiritual dead in sins, we were born again by the abundant mercy of God. God the Father who chose you, used the Gospel to send His Holy Spirit into your heart to breath spiritual life into you. For most of us, this happened when the Spirit worked through the water and Word in Baptism. For others it was the Word of the Gospel as it was spoken to them. Either way, God used His tools and you were born of the Spirit to a new and living hope.

This living hope is centered in the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. If Christ had not risen, we would have no hope. There would be no assurance of sins forgiven. There would be no promise of our resurrection from the dead. There would be no hope of heaven. But Jesus did rise from the dead. Our sins are all paid for. Because He lives we too shall live. And because the Son rose, the Triune God has an inheritance reserved for us in heaven. An inheritance of grace that cannot be corrupted or defiled. This inheritance does not fade over time. Heaven will be just as grand and glorious for you as it was for Abraham and Elijah. Therefore rejoice greatly in the Triune God who has begotten you in time to this living hope!

KEEPS YOU

And yet we're not quite there yet, are we? We rejoice greatly that our Triune God has chosen us to be His children and that He made us His children by calling us to faith in Jesus. We rejoice to hear that the glories of heaven will never fade or change. But we aren't quite there yet. We are right now in the middle of our race of faith and maybe we are worried. We know that in any race things can go wrong. We can get tripped up and we can fall. We know of countless Christians who have fallen from the faith when they were allured away by the world. We worry about being able to cross the finish line or we worry about our children crossing the finish line in heaven.

Well, let us not make the mistake of making God so small that He fits inside our head.

Listen once again to what the Triune God promises to do. He who chose us and begot us promises to keep us to the end. Verse 5, ***“Who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.”*** It is true, the Church is under daily assault. Satan, the world, and even our own sinful flesh attack us relentlessly and try to trip us up and make us fall in this race. But we are kept by the power of the Triune God and no one is more powerful than God!

This guarding and keeping is the work of each person of the Trinity as well. Listen to what Jesus said in the Good Shepherd section of John 10, ***“I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of My Father's hand.”*** (Jn 10:28-29) The Good Shepherd along with God the Father protects His sheep from the wolf.

Likewise God the Holy Spirit is active to keep us in the faith unto the end. We have become very familiar with the words of Philippians 4:7, ***“The peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.”*** The Holy Spirit is at work to guard our hearts and minds from all attackers. But just as God has tools to bring us to faith, God has tools to keep us in the faith. That tool is the Gospel, both in Word and Sacrament. The Holy Spirit uses the peace of God which we receive through the Means of Grace to guard our hearts and minds from all attackers. The very thing Triune God used to bring us to faith, is the very thing He promises to use to keep us in the faith until the end. Rejoice greatly in the Triune God!

The teaching of the Trinity is hard to understand with our minds. It is like trying to drain an ocean into a ditch. It is too great and too awesome for us to comprehend with our sin-tainted minds. However, by faith we see just how glorious this teaching is! In His Word we hear how each person of the God-head is actively involved in saving us. From choosing us from eternity, to calling us to faith, to keeping to the end, God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit are active in the salvation of our souls. From beginning to end, our salvation is entirely the work of the Triune God in us. Even though we face trials and tribulations in this life, it brings us inexpressible joy to know that the God of all creation wants us to be with Him in heaven. Let us always greatly rejoice in the Triune God! Amen.