

May 27, 2018

Holy Trinity Sunday

GOSPEL

John 3:1–17

Jesus' miracles prompt Nicodemus to visit him in secrecy. Jesus tells him about being born of the Spirit and about the Son who has been sent by God to save.

Now there was a Pharisee named Nicodemus, a leader of the Jews. ²He came to Jesus by night and said to him, "Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God; for no one can do these signs that you do apart from the presence of God." ³Jesus answered him, "Very truly, I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above." ⁴Nicodemus said to him, "How can anyone be born after having grown old? Can one enter a second time into the mother's womb and be born?" ⁵Jesus answered, "Very truly, I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit. ⁶What is born of the flesh is flesh, and what is born of the Spirit is spirit. ⁷Do not be astonished that I said to you, 'You must be born from above.' ⁸The wind blows where it chooses, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit." ⁹Nicodemus said to him, "How can these things be?" ¹⁰Jesus answered him, "Are you a teacher of Israel, and yet you do not understand these things?

¹¹Very truly, I tell you, we speak of what we know and testify to what we have seen; yet you do not receive our testimony. ¹²If I have told you about earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you about heavenly things? ¹³No one has ascended into heaven except the one who descended from heaven, the Son of Man. ¹⁴And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, ¹⁵that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.

¹⁶For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.

¹⁷Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.

A lot of comedians have become famous by coming up with a particular bent on the human condition and then using that angle, that phrase, that perspective to display human behavior at its most comical, absurd, and unusual. Comedian Jeff Foxworthy has the phrase: “you might be a redneck if...” Larry the cable guy had his phrase: “get R done.” Gabriel Iglesias will somehow work in: “I’m not fat, I’m fluffy.” The late John Pinette would say: “I say nay, nay.” And the late Rodney Dangerfield would say: “I get no respect.” In dating myself a little bit, you waited for Steve Martin to say that he was a “wild and crazy guy.” Tommy Smothers to say: “Mom always liked you best.” Or going way back to Jack Benny: “Now cut that out.” Comedian Bill Engvall’s famous stick is: “Here’s your sign.” He says here’s your sign after someone says something totally stupid and obvious. In other words the sign says I am stupid. Here are a few examples: Someone comes up to someone who is sitting on a newspaper on a bench and asks them “are you reading that?” Here’s your sign. “Or somebody is flying a kite with a child, and a person walks up and says are you flying a kite? No, I’m a person just fishing for birds.” Here’s your sign. He also says, he was traveling down the road with a buddy and they see a guy driving around in a jeep with a dead deer strapped to the hood. His buddy said to him, do you think he's been hunting? No, they're probably giving them away with the purchase of every jeep. Here's your sign! And of course, there are many others.

In some ways today when Nicodemus asked Jesus what does it mean to be born from above, or quite literally born again, Nicodemus says does that mean one would need to enter a mother’s womb a second time? There’s a point of that conversation which maybe I would like to stand next

to Nicodemus, or maybe Jesus himself, wanted to hand Nicodemus and say: “Here’s your sign.”

I wonder throughout the ministry of Jesus how many times he wanted to say to the masses of people. “Here’s your sign?” Certainly, in the Gospel of Mark, as well as the other gospels the disciples are often befuddled, confused, and seem to be clueless to what is going on. I’m guessing that Jesus would like to have said “here’s your sign.”

Today marks an interesting Sunday in the church year. Every year the first Sunday after Pentecost is called Holy Trinity Sunday. It is a time in the church and we each we lift up the Godhead meaning, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. We talk about this in different ways about three in one and one in three. We talk about the creator, the redeemer and the sustainer. We come up with different ways to understand how God connects to us. In some ways when it comes to the Holy Trinity I think maybe God would hand to me or say to me: “here’s your sign.”

There is so much about God that we do not understand and I count the Trinity among them. For me what is helpful in the end is that the three articles of the creed, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, are ways in which God seeks to interact with humanity, the ways in which God makes Godself present in this creation, present in the Savior Jesus Christ, present in our lives now in the church and individually and communally with the Holy Spirit. If we can come at the trinity as understanding, as knowing, that God seeks to connect with us through the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, as ways to come at us, as ways to seek us out, as ways to challenge us, as ways to create us, as ways to love us, as ways to forgive us, as ways to be present with us, as ways to comfort us, and as ways ultimately

to save us, then maybe we are getting at the root of how God is in three persons.

It is not that God first was creator and then Jesus came along and then gave the gift of the Holy Spirit after that, though we often use that language; however, we understand that these are all the parts of the one God that has been eternal from the beginning. Moreover, before we want to say here's our sign, to ourselves as maybe we feel less than in our understanding, if we can see this activity of God in three as ways that God wants to encounter humanity, to save humanity then maybe we are getting somewhere.

This is what Jesus is really getting at in the whole of the Gospel today and really all of the gospels - that God sent the Son Jesus Christ to be incarnate among us so that we may even more fully align and enmesh with God. God sends the Holy Spirit on Pentecost, as another way to guide the church, guide us throughout our lives. The ultimate goal is in that famous verse John 3:16 and also John 3:17 that God comes to this earth; that God wants to save us, that God does not come to condemn us.

This is of course, Memorial Day weekend, the kick off of the summer when school years are ending, when swimming pools are opening, when our schedules change. But we know that ultimately Memorial Day is meant to pay tribute to those who died while seeking to give us a freedom to live. We also have Veterans Day in November, which also honors the living who have served so that we may enjoy a unique freedom on this earth. And in just a few weeks we will celebrate the independence of our country on July 4th. All three of these ways, though very different in their focus, ultimately point to what we are blessed to live in each day - and that is freedom; a freedom that is a taste of what ultimate freedom is in Christ. In the

Christian perspective all three of those holidays come at us, but we know that individually they do not stand on their own without the other.

Today in the church we celebrate our freedom that comes through the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit., the Holy Trinity of God. We are blessed to be able to know a freedom in the Christian faith that comes through this Godhead. It is a freedom that we only taste now, but it points to a bigger picture. We are thankful for God that we know goes to all means to seek us out, that God will go to extreme measures to reveal God salvation so that we may know and experience love, forgiveness, and unconditional grace. This does not mean we always understand everything about God, we do not know the ways of this world and the ways of the earth. Now we know we only see in the mirror dimly, but in some future time we will see face to face.

So, as we fully enter into this season of Pentecost, as we recognize God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit., may we enter in the summer of green with a sense of growing - growing in the knowledge of God's presence in our life, growing with the task to renew ourselves and challenge ourselves, to go deeper in our faith, growing in our potential to touch the lives of others with the Gospel, growing in seeing the struggles of the other, and seeing how we need to act in our Christian faith. Amen.