

A Trinity of Love

King of Glory Lutheran Church
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Holy Trinity: Year B: John 3:1-17
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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? ¹¹"Very 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. ¹⁶"For 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. ¹⁷"Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.

One in three, three in one. The Holy Trinity is mysterious with infinite possibilities. What matters more than being able to comprehend the three persons of the Trinity, is that Jesus was sent by God as a sign of infinite love. He was sent into a world that hated God.

In the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. In the name of the Creator, the Redeemer, the Sustainer, we listen for you this night/day. Amen.

When was the first time you experienced love? Was it in the arms of a parent, or heard in the words of a grandparent, or was it that high school crush, that boy or girl that you still remember? Maybe it was at a camp retreat and the realization of

God's love came to you like a warm breeze on a summer night. Perhaps it was that time that you fell in love with the wrong person. It wasn't logical, it didn't make any sense and yet... your heart told you everything that you needed to know.

In first John chapter 4, we read that God is the author and the creator of love. We do not know or understand love without God first loving us. What a wondrous thing! What an amazing thing God should choose to love us. At Sonrisers, the men are reading a book by Savannah Guthrie, "Mostly What God Does." She writes if everyone just realized how much God loved them everything could change. She is right. When we begin to understand and let it sink all the way from the top of our head down to the bottom of our feet the depth to which God loves us, it changes everything.

That sense of being beloved by God or others, can get beaten down in all of us as we go through the worries and challenges of life. Because of the world's standards of success or achievement, we can exit off that main highway of love into byways and country roads of fear, shame, guilt. Many of us are harder on ourselves than we would ever be with someone else. Our internal sense of failure whether that is perceived or real, tempts us to believe that God might not love us.

Nicodemus, a member of the Sanhedrin and prominent teacher, comes to Jesus at night. He believes in God, but he does not know what to believe about all he doesn't understand about Jesus. Nicodemus comes scared of what his colleagues might think if they discovered him. He arrives confused by what he sees and hears Jesus doing, and the knowledge in his head versus the growing faith in his heart.

Jesus immediately throws Nicodemus's world out of order by telling him that he must be born anew. He hears it literally. "How can a man be born when he is old?" The irony is that Nicodemus is one of the only side characters in the gospel of John whose faith does grow and change over three years.

After multiple exchanges wherein Nicodemus gets more and more concrete in his thinking and Jesus answers are ever more otherworldly, Jesus makes it simpler. "For God so loved the world that he gave his only son that whoever believes in him shall not perish but she'll have eternal life."

For God so loved the world. Ever since the 1st covenants God made with God's people Israel way back in the Old Testament, God's love was shown for them. They wanted kings and God gave them kings. There wasn't anything that God wouldn't do to demonstrate God's love for the world. That included the execution of God's only Son on a cross. 'For God so loved the world...'

In John's gospel, anytime the word “world” is used, the world is an entity that hates God and is diametrically opposed to God. Jesus says this in chapter 15. “If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own; But because you are not of the world but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.” God's desire to save the world, is much larger than the haters of the world.

As David Lose says, “God loves this God-hating world enough to send God’s only Son.” (Repeat) There is nothing that God will not do to continue loving the world. Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world but in order that the world might be saved through him.

Can you think of someone you know or someone in the news that just really dislikes people? Now think of showering love upon that person. Over and over again you shower love. At first it hits them like a stone bouncing off a turtle’s hard shell. They don’t believe, they don’t want anything to do with you. It takes a long, long time for one who is a hater to begin to feel the warmth of love. God loves this God-hating world enough to send God’s only Son.

What does God do with those God haters, or any of the rest of us for that matter? Listen again to the very next verse. John 3 verse 17.

“God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.” God is not vengeful, not demanding of judgment or appeasement, not angry, but loving. Just plain loving. And the cross is not a mechanism to appease God or satisfy God’s justice or thirst for blood, but rather is the sign of just how far God will go to show us that God already loves us. There is nothing God will not do for us in love, the cross testifies, while the resurrection promises that God’s love is more powerful than all things, even death.” David Lose In the Meantime (<https://www.davidlose.net/2018/05/trinity-sunday-b-love-yeah-just-love/>)

Of course, God's justice will come upon all of us who sin against God. Scriptures are clear about judgment. Yet, God's sense of judgement and justice is born out of God’s character of absolute love. There is forgiveness! There is grace! There is mercy! God so loves the world. God so loves you. God so loves me.

Paul in the book of Romans goes even farther. God adopts us as children and makes us heirs. Many of you have made up a will. You’ve thought long and hard about who or what will receive your money and possessions when you die. Who

are the heirs? Paul says that God makes us co-heirs with Christ! Co-heirs! We are co-inheriters of all that God has for God's beloved children.

When we're making a will we weigh the pros and cons of which child or institution will appreciate our gifts more, or are more worthy of our possessions. If we are co-heirs with Christ, then our mistakes, our failures, those things which weigh us down...God looks over. We are loved and inherit all of God's blessings through Christ.

God loves the Aurora man shot on Friday night. God loves the shooter. God loves those we deem unlovable, including ourselves. God loves the politicians who drive us nuts. God loves the young couple and religious leader killed in Haiti. God loves those who hurt them. God loves. It is in God's character to love. And we love, because God first loved us.

On this Trinity weekend, remember 'The Father is one who loves, the Son the beloved, and the Spirit the love shared between them.' It is like the love shared among a community, a love shared so deeply that it can't be contained but spills out from the Trinity into the whole world and into our lives.' Amen.

[\(https://www.davidlose.net/2018/05/trinity-sunday-b-love-yeah-just-love/\)](https://www.davidlose.net/2018/05/trinity-sunday-b-love-yeah-just-love/)