

June 12, 2022  
The Holy Trinity  
St. Timothy Lutheran Church – Huber Heights, OH  
Pastor Joel Sutton

Acts 2:14a, 22-36

GOD, THE FATHER, SON, AND HOLY SPIRIT, WORK TOGETHER FOR OUR SALVATION.

Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Our text for meditation today comes from the book of Acts, the 2<sup>nd</sup> chapter, which you heard read earlier.

Today is the Sunday of the Holy Trinity. The doctrine of the Holy Trinity is not merely some theological concept with no connection to life. In today's world of universalism, diversity, and inclusion, there is much confusion to the identity of who God truly is – *if* there *is* a true God. The world chases after a plethora of false gods that suit their own passions. And they demand that you acknowledge those false gods to be authentic.

So, it is important now, more than ever, that we emphasize that there is only one true God. He is the Triune God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, who is revealed in Holy Scripture. Do not be deceived! Accept no substitutes! Any gods other than the Triune God are false gods.

Unfortunately, some folks and entire denominations reject the doctrine of the Holy Trinity. They will tell you that the word Trinity is not in the Bible – and it is true – the word Trinity is *not* in the Bible. But the Scriptures are full of references to the *triune nature* of God. Without the Trinity, all mankind would be lost to eternal damnation.

The Holy Trinity is much more than a doctrine. It is a *living reality* and God's *self-revelation* of *who He is*. He is the One who gave His only begotten Son into death for the salvation and new life of sinners, and proceeding from the Father and the Son is the gift of the Holy Spirit to reveal Himself to us in Scripture and call us to true faith in Him. God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, united in one divine essence, working together to bring about our salvation.

Now, it is also true that we often talk about the unique work of each person of the Trinity.

- Yes, we refer to God the Father as the Creator who continues to create and sustain the world and all creatures with His First Article gifts.
- And yes, we refer to God the Son as the Redeemer who rescued all mankind from sin, death, and the power of the devil with His holy precious blood and His innocent suffering and death.
- And yes, we refer to the Holy Spirit as the Sanctifier who convicts and crushes stone cold hearts in the preaching of the Law and then comforts and soothes those same hearts in the preaching of the Gospel, creating faith and regenerating hearts.

So, there is nothing wrong with speaking of the unique work of the three persons in the Trinity. It is biblical. But as I said, the persons of the Holy Trinity are united in one divine essence and work together to bring about our salvation. Our second reading this morning is a wonderful example of this. In our text, it is the day of Pentecost. God the Father has just poured out the gift of the Holy Spirit on Jesus' followers. St Peter is preaching what we refer to as his Pentecost sermon, but it is not really about the Holy Spirit. It is about Jesus. Jesus working together with the Father and the Holy Spirit.

Last week we heard the story of God sending of the Holy Spirit in Jesus' Name, fulfilling the Old Testament prophesy of Joel (cf: Joel 2:28-32) making it possible for the Gospel to be proclaimed and heard in all languages so that the Holy Spirit can call and gather people from all nations into Christ's one Church. For everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. (cf: Acts 2:21)

St Peter explained to the crowds that all who were speaking in foreign languages were not drunk but filled with the Holy Spirit. (cf: Acts 2:5-21) As our text opens today, Peter continues his preaching and swings the heavy hammer of God's Law into the hearts of those listening saying:

***"Men of Israel, hear these words: [this] Jesus of Nazareth... you crucified and killed..."*** (Acts 2:22-23)

Even though many in the crowd were neither present, nor directly responsible for the death of Jesus on the cross, Peter accuses each and every one of them of the murder of the holy One of God who was sent to perform mighty works and wonders and signs. Preaching on this particular text, Martin Luther said:

***"Peter preached powerfully against all... He made it so obvious that no one could escape by saying by way of excuse: 'I did not do it; the officials did!' But he says, 'Men of Israel,' etc., as if I were to say, by way of illustration: 'You citizens of Wittenberg are murderers and have crucified Him who was innocent.'"*** (LW 56, 301)

So what say you citizens of Dayton, living 2,000 years after that day of Pentecost? You and I are no different than Luther's hearers in Wittenberg or Peter's hearers in Jerusalem. You and I are murderers and have crucified the innocent Christ Jesus. Sure, you were not there at Mt. Calvary on Good Friday, but you and I have inherited sin which clings to our flesh. Plus, we are guilty of our own individual sins. Scripture teaches that the wages of sin is death. (cf: Romans 6:23) And the problem with sin is that you and I cannot free ourselves from its grasp. We try to do the right thing but, in turn, we daily sin much.

Perhaps you believe you have hidden and buried your sin and transgression where no can see or find it. But God sees your sin. Your sin and mine is just as deadly and damnable as the sin of all those whom you believe to be the evil dregs of the earth. Your sin is just as detestable in the eyes of God. Apart from Jesus, no human has kept God's Law perfectly as He demands. So if God was going to rescue and save you and all mankind from sin and all the evil in the world, someone had to die. And that Someone is Jesus. He was delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God. (cf: Acts 2:23)

**“... God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”** (Romans 5:8)

He died for all your sins that you have done and left undone. He has died for your sins of unbelief: not believing that you have sinned against God, not believing in the Triune God, and not believing that Jesus’ death and Word of Absolution actually forgives your sins.

What is striking in our text to us sitting here, 2,000 years later, is that St. Peter does not argue that Christ's resurrection from the dead **was a fact**. Today, the resurrection is a huge stumbling block because dead people do not come back to life. But Peter did not have to argue that the resurrection was a fact. He simply states it **as a fact** that can be confirmed by witnesses. (cf: Acts 2:22-24, 32; 1 Corinthians 15:6) He expects that his hearers know and accept Jesus’ resurrection as a fact. And his point is not that the resurrection is **a fact** – but the **significance** of the resurrection. With hearts crushed by the Law, Peter now proclaims the soothing salve of the Gospel. He quotes the psalmist to show that David foresaw the resurrection of Jesus and understood its significance. (cf: Acts 2:25-28)

By faith David recognized that his Lord, the Messiah, whom we know as Jesus, was always with him. And because of that faith he would not be shaken by all the hardships in life. His joy is anchored beyond the circumstances in this life. He had joy and confidence in the hope that the Messiah’s death would take away the sin that separated him and all mankind from God. And because God the Father would not abandon Jesus in the grave, but raise Him, David knew that God would not abandon him in death either. By the power of the Holy Spirit, God made known to David the **paths of life** by which God would lead him to eternal joy in God’s presence.

Peter next reminds his hearers that David was God’s prophet and that God had promised David that one of his descendants would sit on His throne forever. By the Holy Spirit, David foresaw and spoke about the resurrection of the Christ Jesus, the Messiah, whom God raised from the dead and they all are witnesses. (cf: Acts 2:29-32) The fact that Jesus was raised from the dead and is seated at the right hand of the Father is evidence of God’s approval of Jesus’ perfect work of salvation in His earthy life and death.

Peter’s sermon showed the people of his day what Pentecost meant for them. The fact that the Pentecost crowd had witnessed the fulfillment of David’s prophesy of the risen Messiah and the fulfillment of God’s promise to pour out his Holy Spirit on His people – it is God’s proof to them that God had made Jesus to be both Lord and Messiah. (cf: Acts 2:33-36) It meant that all who trust and believe that Jesus is Lord and Messiah have all the blessings foretold by David and quoted by Peter in his sermon.

Unfortunately, our text stops short of the conclusion. The proclamation of God’s Word is performative. It always works. It always bears fruit. It either further hardens stone cold hearts or it creates faith in the hearts of those hear and believe. Immediately following our text, St Luke records:

**“<sup>37</sup> Now when they heard this they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, ‘Brothers, what shall we do?’ <sup>38</sup> And Peter said to them, ‘Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the**

*“forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”* (Acts 2:37–38)

So what does all of this mean for you? The outpouring of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost means the same thing for you and me as it meant for David and Peter. Like those who were Baptized on the Day of Pentecost, you received the gift of the Holy Spirit in the waters of Baptism. Like those hearing Peter’s sermon, the preaching of the Law accuses you of your sin so that you are cut to the heart – so that by daily contrition and repentance you drown your old Adam and die with all sins and evil desires, and emerge a new creation and arise to live before God in righteousness and purity forever. It means you are forgiven of all your sins and you are now empowered to flee from all your sin and unrighteousness.

It means that you can know that since your Lord and Messiah is always with you, your faith need not be shaken by all the hardships that you encounter in this life, whether sickness, sorrow, despair, or death. It means that you can experience joy and hope because of your confidence in God’s Messiah and your certainty that He will not abandon you. Jesus’ death on the cross has reconciled you to God by forgiving the sin that separated you. Now, since you have been joined to Jesus in Baptism, and God did not abandon Him, you know He will not leave you in death: temporal or eternal. It means that in Jesus, God has revealed to you *the paths of life*. Jesus’ death and resurrection is the path by which God will lead you to the joy of eternal life with Him in heaven. Why is that? The Holy Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, which are united in one divine essence, work together to accomplish their common will: the salvation of all mankind.

Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understand, guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus,  
Amen.