

Romans 11:33–36
Trinity Sunday
Kaiserslautern Ev. Luth. Ch.
June 4, 2023

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

Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways! “For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been his counselor?” “Or who has given a gift to him that he might be repaid?” For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen.

Dearly bought hearers by the blood of Jesus Christ,

Today we celebrate the Feast of the Most Holy Trinity, when we focus on the one God who is three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. That our God is one in three and three in one, Trinity in Unity and Unity and Trinity, is one of the most profound mysteries of the Christian faith, a mystery that is necessary for our salvation. But the doctrine of the Triune God is an offense to non-Christian religions, like Muslims and Jews, and an offense to heretical groups, like Mormons and Jehovah’s Witnesses. Those outside of the Christian faith consider the doctrine of the Trinity to be nothing short of blasphemy, a reversion to polytheism. And of course the doctrine of the Trinity is also an offense to plain reason. Our human minds cannot grasp what it means for God to be one and yet three or three and yet one. It simply doesn’t add up mathematically. Yet in His divine wisdom, our Lord has seen fit to reveal His true nature to us. He doesn’t reveal the truth of who He is to confuse us or to scratch some tickle of curiosity we might have. Our Triune God reveals the truth of who He is that we might truly know Him and the salvation He gives us in our Lord Jesus Christ, that we might rightly call upon Him, enter into Communion with Him, and finally enjoy eternal life with our God who is eternal.

Sometimes the objection is raised that the term “Trinity” is nowhere found in Scripture. It’s true. You can look in any concordance and the word is not there. But don’t let this objection

fool you. When we and all the generations before us speak about the “Trinity” or the “Triune God,” we’re simply using a kind of shorthand to indicate what Scripture is saying. God is one, yet there are three distinct persons of the Godhead. Reason itself teaches that there is one God. There can be only one ultimate cause of all things. Everything has a cause and if you keep going back and back and back you end up at the cause of all causes, the primary cause, which is God. Reason can understand that God is one, and the Bible itself testifies to this truth, that God is one. The Creed of ancient Israel, called the Shema, is found in Deuteronomy 6[:4] and it goes like this: “Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one.” The surrounding nations were polytheistic. They worshiped multiple false gods. Israel, however, was to worship the one true God and Him alone.

God is one. But listen again to how the Shema goes: “Hear, O Israel: The *LORD* our *God*, the *LORD* is one.” The one God is confessed three times. One in three and three in one. Trinity in Unity and Unity in Trinity. In fact, everywhere you look in the Old Testament and in the New Testament, you see subtle indications of the one true God revealing Himself as three. Already from the beginning, in Genesis chapter one, there’s a Trinity in Unity: “In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters. And God said . . .” God the Father created, God the Holy Spirit was hovering over the face of the waters, and God the Son, the Word of God, was spoken. Or in the creation of our first parents, Adam and Eve, God says: “Let *us* make man in *our* image, after *our* likeness.” Notice the plural pronouns. “So God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created Him; male and female He created them.” God’s creation of man emphasizes a threeness. Or there’s our Old Testament Lesson for today, the song of the Seraphim in Isaiah 6, who call out “Holy, holy, holy is the

LORD of hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory!” The one LORD has a threeness about Him. You see this one in three and three in one dynamic throughout the Old Testament.

Without the New Testament, though, this Trinity in Unity and Unity in Trinity would be difficult to see. It might just be a coincidence, or a superlative way of speaking. However, in the New Testament, the Triune God is clearly revealed in and by and through our Lord Jesus Christ. God became man in Jesus Christ to reveal Himself to the world. Jesus made statements equating Himself with God the Father, statements like “before Abraham was, I AM” (John 8:58) and “I and the Father are one” (John 10:30), for which He was nearly stoned to death. As we’ve seen in the last few weeks leading up to Pentecost, Jesus spoke especially about His relationship to the Father and the Holy Spirit in the Upper Room discourse, our Lord’s teaching on the night He was betrayed. Jesus says that the Holy Spirit “will glorify Me, for He will take what is mine and declare it to you. All that the Father has is mine; therefore I said that He [the Holy Spirit] will take what is mine and declare it to you” (John 16:14–15). The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit work in unison to create, redeem, and sanctify you. And if all that wasn’t enough, we have the explicit command of Jesus at the end of Matthew to baptize in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit: one name, one God, three Persons. The Trinity in Unity and Unity in Trinity is declared openly throughout the New Testament.

And Jesus reveals the Triune God to us and He brings us into the life of the Triune God. That’s because Jesus is the Second Person of the Holy Trinity, the Son of God, who took upon Himself our humanity to die for our sins, rise again from the dead, ascend into Heaven to reign over all things until He returns to judge the living and the dead, and then take us to be with Himself in eternity. The incarnation of the Son of God is where the Triune God meets humanity at the most intimate level. One of the Holy Trinity became man to live for us, to suffer and die

for us, and to rise for us that we might live in Him, for Him, and to Him. In Jesus Christ, we are united to the Triune God and He is united to us. Our human nature has been assumed into the godhead.

All this comes to us in Holy Baptism. That's where we are united to the death and resurrection of Jesus, where we become members of the Body of Christ, and in Christ, we also enter into communion with the Triune God. Baptized into Jesus Christ, God becomes our Father and we receive the Holy Spirit as our Advocate, crying out to God the Father from within us. In Baptism, you were born of water and spirit, water and the word. The Triune God who created you also redeems you and sanctifies you. The Holy Spirit brings you to Christ and in Christ to the Father, from whom you receive the Spirit of Truth. All three persons of the Trinity are always working for your good, to give you physical, spiritual, and ultimately, eternal life.

As you can see, the Holy Trinity is not a speculative philosophical principle or a way we balance contradictory statements about God from the Scriptures. The Holy Trinity is how God reveals Himself to us because the Trinity is who God is. One God, three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, who gives you life and makes you a partaker in His life. That's who God is for all eternity, the LORD over all who we daily worship and adore. We worship one God in Trinity and Trinity in Unity, neither confusing the persons nor dividing the substance. Just think about how often the Triune God comes up throughout the public Liturgy of the Church. From the invocation in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit to the threefold Aaronic Benediction: "The LORD bless you and keep you, the Lord make His face shine upon you and be gracious to you, the LORD lift up His countenance upon You and give you peace," the Holy Trinity is called upon and praised throughout our Divine Service. He is the beginning and the end of all our worship and adoration. Just think about how much the Holy Trinity comes up in our personal

prayers, as you pray to the Father, through the Son, by the power of the Holy Spirit. The Triune God is always there.

On this Trinity Sunday, we focus on the Trinity in Unity and Unity in Trinity, that the one God is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The God who created you became man to redeem you, and that same God sanctifies you in the one true faith. He is beyond our feeble human understanding, yet in grace reveals Himself to us. The Holy Trinity is not a concept of abstract theology. He is the ground of all being, the source of all that exists. And the Holy Trinity is not far from each one of us, for in Him, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, we live and move and have our being (Acts 17:27–28). From Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be glory forever. In the name of Jesus, Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen. We stand for the Offertory.