

Sermon: The Holy Trinity

Text: Acts 2:22-36 (vv.32,33)

Theme: The Holy Trinity

Goal: To take comfort in the fact that our God is Father, Son and Holy Spirit, who works together for our salvation and for our good.

Dear Friends,

Introduction: The Festival of the Holy Trinity is the only Festival of the Christian Church that celebrates a Doctrine. All the other Festivals celebrate an event: Christmas, Palm Sunday, Good Friday, Easter, Pentecost, Reformation... Why should a doctrine be celebrated? Because it is related with our salvation! We were all baptized in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. What does it mean for our lives? And if you don't confess the Holy Trinity, what guarantee do you have for your salvation?

I – The origin of this Festival: The Creeds.

The Athanasian Creed, which we confessed today, seems to be a little bit complicated. Why so many repetitions? Why so many arguments? The affirmations we confess in this Creed are not just statements of faith written by chance. They are all answers to questions raised in the first centuries of Christianity, and they are affirmations of faith against heresies that were growing among the early Christian Church.

You have to imagine the situation of the first Christians after the Apostles passed away. The Apostles had been witnesses of what Jesus said and did. They wrote the New Testament. But copies of the Bible were not available for all the people. Even many priests didn't have copies of all the books of the Bible. The oral tradition was dominating culture and church. And as the Gospel was spreading so fast, many new Christian leaders around the world

didn't have a document, a book with the summary of the Christian faith. Wrong teachings were easily spread.

*The Bible had referenced all three members of the Trinity in a number of places, but the relationship between Father, Son, and Holy Spirit had never really been explicitly stated in Scripture, at least not in a way that everyone could agree to.* (Phil Brandt, p. 2). Doubts about if Jesus is true God were common. How can it be that we worship only One God, but we call Jesus as God, the Father as God, and the Holy Spirit as God? How does it work?

While the Christian Church was still persecuted by the Roman Emperors, it was impossible to gather representatives of all Christian Churches from the Western and from the Eastern world to discuss it. But when the Emperor Constantine was converted and professed the Christian faith, he called a meeting of all the Bishops to the city of Nicaea (now part of Turkey) in the year 325 AD.

It was not just a theological debate. It had to do with the cross, with our salvation. If Jesus is not God, but a mere creature, His sacrifice on the cross wouldn't be sufficient for our sins. *How can we trust that the death of another creature could save us from sin? And how does the Holy Spirit fit into all this?* (Phil Brandt p. 3)

After several debates and searching in the Holy Scriptures, the Nicene Creed was formulated, assuring that the Lord Jesus Christ is *the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of his Father before all worlds, God of God, light of Light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father.* Because the debate centered entirely on the person of the Son, nothing was said about the Spirit but *I believe in the Holy Spirit.* When the issue was raised about the Holy Spirit, another Council was summoned to Constantinople in 381. And it was confessed that the Holy Spirit is

*the Lord and Giver of Life, who proceed from the Father and the Son, who with the Father and the Son together is worshiped and glorified.*

Years later, as some still continuously attacked the divinity of Jesus and of the Holy Spirit, the Athanasian Creed was formulated, as we confess it today in this Service.

## II – The Trinity shows us God’s love

As I said at the beginning, the doctrine of the Holy Trinity is not just a matter of doctrine of the church; it has to do with our salvation. Our text is clear when it points to the work of the three person of the Holy Trinity working for our good. Peter finished his Pentecost sermon with the words, mentioning what the Holy Trinity had done for our salvation: “God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of the fact. Exalted to the right hand of God, he has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit and has poured out what you now see and hear... Therefore, let all be assured of this: God has made this Jesus whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ!”

*Peter calls Jesus Lord. For a Jew that was a term religiously speaking that one only spoke of YHWH, the true God, who parted the Red Sea and who sent the prophets. Peter is making an astounding claim, a claim which is repeated many times in the NT. Jesus is Lord! We are so accustomed to hearing this, it no longer shocks us; but the whole New Testament narrative really can be said to revolve around this claim. This first sermon of Christendom is really the beginning of the proclamation of Trinity. (Phil Brandt p. 28).*

*Augustine, one of the church’s father, believed that the really interesting thing was what held the Father, Son, and Spirit together. It is love. He did not mean the mushy sentimentality which we often mean when we use the word, but he meant the great and deep*

*mystery. We start to see it just a little when we see the mother caring for the profoundly disabled child well into adulthood. (Phil Brandt, p. 35)*

### III – It's a matter of faith

All the efforts to explain the Holy Trinity are in vain and sometimes confuse more than help. Understanding has its limit. It is a matter of faith. God revealed Himself in this way in the Holy Scripture, and we believe it, worshiping the Unity in the Trinity, and the Trinity in the Unity, One Lord and One God in three persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. We believe that this Triune God loves us so much that the Father sent His one and only Son to die for us, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life (John 3:16). And we believe also that the Holy Spirit has called us by the Gospel, enlightened us with his gifts, sanctified us and keeps us in the true faith in Jesus. Whatever more we want to know, God will reveal it in heaven.

What cannot happen is that we deny the Only True God Father, Son and Holy Spirit, as some sects do it. We prayed at the beginning of the Service: *Almighty and everlasting God, You have given us grace to acknowledge the glory of the eternal Trinity by the confessing of a true faith and to worship the Unity in the power of the Divine Majesty. Keep us steadfast in this faith and defend us from all adversities.*

Conclusion: *So, The Trinity is important to us, because it reveals the heart of God to us, the love which sent Jesus to the Cross, the love which obeyed the Father's command, the Love which did not leave us as orphans but poured out that Spirit so we might be in communion with God, the Three in One. (Phil Brandt, p. 46).*