

The Power of Three

[John 3:1-17](#)

Today we get the chance to discuss one of the ultimate mysteries of the Bible – the concept of the Holy Trinity. Many have said that God has a sense of humor, and I believe that is most evident as God listens to pastors try to explain this concept. As a scientist, I was always taught to dig for answers because everything could eventually be explained in human terms. However, as someone whose career was spent in health care, I learned that many things about the science of the human body in particular could not be explained in any terms. Patients who should by all accounts be dead within a day live many years beyond their crisis. Good physicians will be the first to tell you that there are mysteries of healing that simply cannot be explained.

So here we are on Trinity Sunday trying to explain the incredible mystery of God in three persons. Trinity comes from the Latin word 'trinitas' which literally means three in one. I have printed some symbols used in various churches to depict the Holy Trinity – God, Jesus, and Holy Spirit. All three are God – God is all three. Yet each seems to have a purpose. God sent God's son Jesus to earth to be the ultimate sacrifice for our sins. While Jesus was on earth, he healed the sick, taught the masses, empowered leaders to continue his work, and initiated a movement that has grown as Christianity recognized throughout most of the world. When Jesus left this earth, he sent the advocate, the Comforter in the Holy Spirit to empower the initial church to do great things. It seems these three are separate beings, yet the idea of the Holy Trinity is three in one – all one God.

At this time I would like to share the pulpit with one of the greatest comedy duos ever. I heard a pastor try to explain the concept of the Holy Trinity in terms of the old Abbott and Costello routine of “Who’s on First?” I would like to play this routine for you – I’m thinking many of you may have seen this before but listen closely for the banter between the two as Lou tries to get the names of the baseball players while Bud hones in on the play-on-words of this famous routine. [Play video]

Now what has that got to do with the Holy Trinity? I think it helps to exemplify a complicated concept. We are all created in God’s image, yet we have limitations within our human understanding. We want to explain everything. We want everything to add up into debit and credit columns with pinpoint accuracy. We want the I’s dotted and the T’s crossed. Yet as Christians we also realize there are many things beyond our

human understanding. It is simply not possible to put all divine concepts into neat little boxes and expect 100% clarity on everything relating to God. I believe that is why we have been given the capacity of faith and trust in God.

One explanation for the Holy Trinity that seems to help me the most is that of comparing the Trinity with the universe. There are 3 major elements that make up the universe – matter, space, and time. If you take away any of these elements, the universe ceases to exist. So I believe it is with the Holy Trinity. All are God and none can be separated from the others. Know that we can try to explain this concept for a lifetime and still not see the whole picture. Like Lou, we will still be trying to find out “Who is on first?” Perhaps it is not as necessary to come to resolution on the Holy Trinity as it is to accept that God loves us so much more than we could ever begin to fathom.

Our scripture from John tells us about the concept of being born again – born of the Holy Spirit. When we choose to follow Jesus’ teachings and accept that we are all sinners, and repent of that sin, we are accepting the love of God for ourselves. We are accepting a rebirth in the Spirit that completely transforms our lives. When we are born of the Spirit, it is like stepping through a new threshold – life is not the same. Last week we talked about Pentecost and the effect of the Holy Spirit on the 120 members of the original church. There is a transforming effect when we accept Jesus for ourselves and are baptized with tongues of fire that empower us to do great things on earth for the kingdom of God. There is a peace that is present within us that the world seems to be searching for. Can we be like Jesus and share the good news of the gospel with everyone we meet? Can we be like Peter who, once he was instilled with the Holy Spirit found a power and boldness to stand up against the

naysayers and share the story of the risen Christ? Let us keep moving forward to take our joy and enthusiasm outside the walls of the church and into the community where people continue to search for peace and comfort. At this year's annual conference, our bishop used the term, 'unbound and outbound' to describe our calling to become the body of Christ and take the church to the people. Thanks be to God for the gift of the Holy Spirit who instills within us a passion and zeal for sharing God's love with others. Amen.