



Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. **AMEN**

This is a story told by Charlie Woodward Pastor of St. Paul Lutheran Church in Westerville, Ohio.

A son came home from Sunday school and was confused about the Holy Trinity. His conversation with father.

Parent (Dad)/Child (Son)

C: Dad, I got a question.

P: What is it, Son.

C: Well, today in Sunday School, we talked about God.

P: God, huh. Maybe you should talk to your mother.

C: Come on, Dad.

P: Okay, Son, what is your question?

C: Well, our teacher was trying to explain the Trinity, you know, God in three persons?

P: Son, I REALLY think this is a Mom question, don't you?

C: Dad....

P: All right, what is your question?

C: Well, I guess it is just confusing. I mean, I have never met a Trinity before.

P: What do you mean, Son.

C: Everyone I know is just one person, not three.

P: I see. And this worries you?

C: It's just confusing, Dad. I mean, who is this Trinity God supposed to be?

P: That is a good question, Son.

C: (PAUSE) Well...

- P:** Well, what?
- C:** Don't you have some wonderful parental insight to help me out, here?
- P:** Right, well, let me think. God is like H₂O, you know, Ice, liquid and steam, all H₂O, but different make-ups...
- C:** So, God is like water?
- P:** Well, not exactly. Oh, okay. Let's try this...your Mother, for instance... She is one person, but she is a mother, a wife and a daughter...
- C:** So, Mom is God?
- P:** Let's not go there, Son. Let me think....
- C:** What about the beauty of a flower, or the smile of a baby?
- P:** What? How is that like Trinity?
- C:** I don't know, but when I see something like that, I know that God must have had a hand in it.
- P:** I would agree with you there, Son.
- C:** But, which one?
- P:** Which one what?
- C:** Which God is involved in something like that?
- P:** I am not following you here, Son.
- C:** Well, if God is three persons, which person makes the flowers bloom? Which person breathes new life into a baby?
- P:** Now wait, remember we have a rule in this house. Mom answers all questions about babies, okay?
- C:** Not just babies, Dad, everything. Which person paints the colors of the sunset? Which person listens to me when no one else will? Which one?
- P:** Wow. These are good questions, Son.
- C:** Which one is it? And how do we know? And who decides? And do they ever argue with each other?
- Do they live in the same place? Can you see them all, or just some of them? How can you tell them apart? Are they identical? Is it just three, or could it be four, or five, or more?
- P:** (LONG PAUSE - staring at Child) Son, the Trinity is like an apple, it has a core, the meat of the apple and the skin...
- C:** Dad?
- P:** Or maybe, like a three-leafed clover?
- C:** You don't know do you?
- P:** Or a triangle?
- C:** I'll go ask Mom, or whoever she is!
- P:** Or three interlocking circles....?

So how do we know which one it is? How do we know who decides? And do they ever argue with each other?

Well, difficult as it is to understand this concept of one in three and three in one, this is the reality of our God. This mystery is difficult to comprehend. In our Gospel text for today,

Jesus is trying to have Nicodemus understand the Spirit. Verse 7 Jesus says, "Do not be astonished that I say to you, 'You must be born from above.'" And then He continues with a statement comparing the wind to the Spirit. I think the idea Jesus is trying to get across to Nicodemus is that the Spirit which came on Pentecost will cause a person to be born anew. That means that the Spirit will cause the person to be a new child in Christ.

It is true that when we were baptized, we received the Holy Spirit. When your parents brought you to the baptismal font, the pastor declared that you were baptized, "In the name of the Father, and the Son, and of the Holy Spirit." A few minutes later in that sacred baptismal liturgy the pastor called you by name and said, "child of God you have been sealed by the Holy Spirit and marked with the cross of Christ forever" as he made the sign of the cross on your forehead. At that point, you were filled with the Holy Spirit. And today we are all still living in that same Spirit as we allow Him to work within each of us.

So, you see, being born of the Spirit is not an act which we accomplish, but rather an act that God does on our behalf. Whenever I talk about baptism inevitably someone will ask why we baptize babies. Lutherans believe fully in the fact that baptism is a God act and even a baby receives the Holy Spirit in the waters of baptism. Baptism is done to us, by a gracious God. We are not the actors creating the scene, but rather we are there as the recipient, ready to be born again in those waters by a God who loves us.

This folk is the same reason, we do not have to grow up to be rebaptized. It is a one-time deal. A God act. And God gets it right the first time and every time a child is baptized. The new birth we receive at our baptism is what the Holy Spirit does for us.

We seem not to spend as much time talking about the Spirit as we do the other two faces of our God except on Pentecost Sunday, last week and this morning, Holy Trinity Sunday. God the Father and Jesus the Savior are easier for us to comprehend in real life terms. God the Creator made and sustains all that is. We were all taught the creation story when we were little in Sunday school. From a formless void God recreated everything. Jesus the Son of God came and walked on the earth as totally human and totally God. Hum mm, another mystery in our faith. He came among us to save us from our sin and give us the promise of abundant and eternal life as He defeated death by raising from the dead.

Together, Father, Son and Holy Spirit are the three faces of our God. Yes, a hard concept to understand no doubt. Yet there is no doubt that God loves us and walks with us each and every day. It is through the Holy Spirit that we come to believe in the God who is three in One.

When I was in college my father got me a summer job at Allen Bradley Corp in downtown Milwaukee. At the time, early 70's, that company had the biggest 4 faced clock in the world. Today, I guess there is now one in Saudi Arabia that is bigger. The clock stood as a sign of the port of Milwaukee to ships arriving on Lake Michigan. It is a magnificent sight. 280 feet high with each of the four faces over 40 feet wide, it can be seen for miles. It is actually twice as big as London's Big Ben. The minute hands are 20 feet long and each weigh over 550 pounds. Hour hand is slightly smaller at 15.8 feet and 490 pounds. For those of you who have seen this clock you realize it's magnitude and majesty in the Milwaukee skyline.

But did you, like me ever wonder if it was four clocks running at once or one clock with four faces?

Wonder if you might, about our God with three faces, three persons. The Trinity is not a vague doctrinal experience, but it is personal. The Trinity is God relating to each of us on a personal level. The Trinity is not a puzzle to be solved, but a relationship to be lived.

As we find ourselves in a relationship with God, we come to understand that God willed everything into being, the Son intercedes on our behalf and the Spirit lives in us. Truly our God is an awesome God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. He is a God that takes care of us on all levels.

And to remind ourselves of what a great God we have, let us all recite the Gospel in a nutshell together, John 3:16 in whatever version of the Bible you learned it. "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."

Yes. "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." Thank you, Triune God for loving us. **AMEN**