

May 30, 2021

Trinity Sunday 2021 JOHN 3:1-17 and ISAIAH 6:1-8

Nicodemus makes a night time visit to Jesus, under the cover of darkness. What happens under the cover of darkness? Usually people who sneak around in the dark are up to no good. Thieves breaking into a house; teenaged lovers sneaking away; illegal immigrants crossing the border; drug deals going down; secrets being shared around a campfire.... Darkness hides so much. And that is why Nicodemus is visiting in the darkness: he is hiding under the cover of darkness. He is a Pharisee, a member of the Sanhedrin, one of the rabbis who sat on a court of law. Nicodemus held a very important position in the Jewish community; he could not chance being seen with Jesus. Although I'd think that the Sanhedrin would have been very interested in what Jesus had to say... Jesus was very well tutored in all aspects of Jewish culture; it would have been a very interesting conversation. And that is exactly what took place between Jesus and Nicodemus, a very interesting conversation which Nicodemus did not understand.

He acknowledges Jesus is from God. Instead of agreeing, Jesus answers almost in a riddle saying, "No one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above. This totally confuses Nicodemus who has no idea how to think of baptism as the rebirth through the Holy Spirit. Jesus says that the wind, the symbol of the Holy Spirit, blows where it chooses. No one knows where it comes from or where it goes. #403 ("Like the murmur of the dove's song, like the challenge of her flight, like the vigor of the wind's rush, like the new flame's eager might: come Holy Spirit, come.")

The Holy Spirit came to dwell with humanity at Pentecost, 50 days after the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. We celebrated Pentecost last Sunday. The Holy Spirit, the person of the Trinity whom Jesus promised to send when he sat at table for the last time with his disciples; the indwelling presence of God, the advisor, the helper, the advocate, the one whom the Nicene Creed refers to as "the Lord, the giver of life."

Jesus goes on to say to Nicodemus the verse that has become so popular we used to see it on signs at football games. Some people call it the gospel in a nutshell... "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but have eternal life."

Hidden in this passage is the message of God the Father, also known as God the Creator. #837 ("Many and great, O God, are your works, maker of earth and sky. Your hands have set the heav'ns with stars; your fingers spread the mountains and plains. Lo, at your word the waters were formed; deep seas obey your voice.") God who with his breath the world was created, who formed Adam from the dust of the earth, who saved Noah from the flood, who covenanted with Abraham to bring into being the Israeli nation; God who led a stubborn people, a people who broke the covenant over and over again, yet God never broke his side of the covenant, instead the Father, a person of the Trinity, sent Jesus his son as the redeemer, the savior of the world.

Jesus, whom the theory of the Atonement tells us gave his life as a sacrifice for the sins of all humanity so that we may be blameless and pure in the sight of God.

Isaiah, in the first reading this morning, had a vision of the hem of the garment of God filling the temple. And the first thing Isaiah said was a confession of his sin... "Woe is me! I am lost, for I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips; yet my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts!" No one is worthy of the presence of God because of their sin. Yet God, directing a seraph to take a coal from the fire of the sin sacrifice, purified Isaiah's lips and took away his sin. God was looking for Isaiah to be a prophet to his people, to spread the word that God was coming near to destroying them because of their sins. Even as the people were turning away from God, God was sending someone to save them. Again, in Jesus the Christ, our Lord and Messiah, God is sending someone to save us. #596 ("My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus' blood and righteousness; no merit of my own I claim, but wholly lean on Jesus' name. On Christ, the solid rock, I stand; all other ground is sinking sand, all other ground is sinking sand.") We have hope through the last blood sacrifice, that of God's own son; the one whom we celebrate during Holy Communion is a person of the Trinity.

The Trinity.... An elusive concept, as it should be... because if we have a God who is small enough for us to totally understand, how deserving is that god for our adoration? The second verse of Psalm 29 which we chanted this morning tells us to "Ascribe to the LORD the glory due God's name; worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness." The Trinity, whom we celebrate each year on Trinity Sunday: Three persons, one God. Often times I try to explain this concept to children by using a banana. If you stick your finger into the end of a banana, it will normally split into three equal parts. By themselves, they are banana, together they are banana; three in one, one in three. Now God is no banana, the persons of the Trinity are not to be thought of as simply a banana. The Trinity exists of three persons, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. But a banana is the best explanation I have ever found to explain how three persons can be one; each one holy in their selves. #413 ("Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty! Early in the morning our song shall rise to thee. Holy, holy, holy, merciful and mighty! God in three Persons, blessed Trinity!")

Jesus made Nicodemus privy to the doctrine of the Holy Trinity on that dark night, when secrets were revealed, and in doing so, allowed us to know the Three Persons of the One God, the Holy Trinity. And, along with Nicodemus, we will never fully understand it. All glory be to God. Amen.