

The 1st Sunday after Pentecost: Trinity Sunday: Holy Trinity Church

June 11, 2017: Matthew 28: 16-20

Why Settle For a Knapsack Instead of a Parachute

Preached

By

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In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Most of you have heard this joke, but I wonder if you have caught its religious significance. It is about a pilot and three passengers, a boy scout, a priest, and a rocket scientist and an airplane that develops engine trouble in mid-flight.

The pilot rushes back to the passenger compartment and exclaims, “The plane is going down! The plane is going down! We only have three parachutes, and there are four of us!” Then the pilot adds, “I have a family waiting for me at home. I must survive!” With that, he grabs one of the parachutes and jumps out of the plane. At this point, the atomic scientist jumps to his feet and declares, “I am the smartest man in the world. It would be a great tragedy if my life was snuffed out!” With that, he also grabs a parachute and exits the

plane. With an alarmed look on his face, the priest says to the Boy Scout, “My son, I have no family. I am ready to meet my Maker. You are still young with much ahead of you. You take the last parachute.” With this, the Boy Scout interrupts the priest, “Relax, Father. Don’t say any more. We’re all right.” The priest asks, “How in the world can you say that we are all right?” The Boy Scout replies, “The reason we’re all right is that the world’s smartest man just jumped out of the plane wearing my knapsack!” I know. It’s a silly joke, but there is an important lesson to be derived from it. Metaphorically, there are many smart people today, successful people, affluent people who are jumping out of airplanes wearing knapsacks instead of parachutes. That is, they are reaching for ideas and philosophies that are very appealing, but those ideas and philosophies will not save them. Those ideas and philosophies are knapsacks and not parachutes. In other words, people today need something they can believe in, and many are looking in the wrong places.

My brothers and sisters, the universe is not a locked safe with the combination inside. There IS meaning and purpose to this world we live in and there is meaning and purpose to the lives we live on earth. There is available to us and to everyone on this planet a body of truth that is knowable, and understandable, and eternal. The early church summed up this truth in the

doctrine we know as the Trinity: God, the Father; God, the Son; God, the Holy Spirit.

There is an important truth in this ancient doctrine that you and I need to see. You won't find the word "Trinity" in the Bible. In fact, you won't find it in the writings of the early church fathers until the third century after Christ's resurrection. The concept of the Trinity is a product of the third century church, but it is based upon sound Biblical faith. This doctrine of God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit properly understood meets the deepest needs that we have in terms of understanding who God is and what our relationship to God is all about

We begin with God as the creator and sustainer of life. God the Father: the all powerful, the all knowing, the ever present and the everlasting. This is the God who spoke and the world was created. This is the God who guides the stars, who rules the heavens, who orders the planets in their orbits. This is the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, as well as, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. This is God in God's transcendent authority, Lawgiver and Judge, the God whose ways are not our ways, the God whose glory is told by the heavens. This is the God in whom all of us believe, as do most of the people in this world. For many of us, however, this God of transcendence seems far

removed from us, out of touch with our needs, our concerns, unapproachable, and unyielding

My sisters and brother in Christ, if all we knew about God was this transcendent Lawgiver and Judge that we have described so far we might very timid about seeking God out. How do you approach a Being who is omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent and everlasting? How can you even imagine a Being who is beyond space and time, the Creator of everything that exists? Our brain cannot begin to cope with such a One. Such a God may seem far off and out of touch with our situation in life.

And this is why God revealed God's true nature in a gentle, compassionate man and that man is of course, Jesus of Nazareth. In Jesus we see God the Son cradling young children in his arms, healing the sick, raising the dead, and treating everyone with dignity and respect. In Jesus, the Son, we are exposed to the approachable side of God, the God who would lay down his own life in behalf of those whom God has created; those whom God formed out of the clay of earth. Without Jesus we would never have known what God was really like. Jesus tells us to call God "Abba," "Daddy," and he teaches us about God's incredible love and showed us God's many graces.

My dear brothers and sisters, Jesus Christ is our bridge to God and to our salvation. We are grateful for God in all God's power and glory. But we are also grateful for God the Son in all his gentleness and grace, for he allows us to approach God with confidence. Because of Jesus the Christ, we know that God is our Mommy/Daddy. God loves us more than our own parents love us. God loves us beyond our wildest imaginations. We are able to know God's true nature because of Jesus Christ, the son of Mary and the Son of God. Jesus is the second person of the Holy Trinity who came into this world to reveal God to us and save us.

But, of course, there is a third person in the Trinity just as important as the first two. That is God the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the presence of God in our daily lives. The Holy Spirit is the inner witness of the reality of God that dwells within us. It is the confirming testimony that God who created us is with us. According to I John 4, our life in the world is actually Christ's life lived within us. That is the work of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is that presence in our lives that allows us to get our lives together, to achieve a spiritual awakening and direction, to take charge of our lives and channel them in ways that glorify God, enrich the world and bring meaning and purpose to our lives.

For many of us, it is all too apparent that we are restrained and restricted from being effective and successful in our living because of the inner conflicts that are tearing us apart. A war is going on inside of us. Using the wonderful and terrible gift of our free will, we are being pushed and pulled from within. We desperately need the Holy Spirit of God to come into our lives and take those warring thoughts and feelings, organize them out of chaos and bring them together. To achieve such a unity of mind and heart requires a surrender of all we are and all we hope to be to the presence and power of God. The sad truth is that many of us want only a partial experience of God's Spirit without total surrender.

My sisters and brothers, the Holy Spirit is the inward sign of the indwelling divine presence of Jesus' spirit, which lives within us and allows us to organize and prioritize our lives. It is this Holy Spirit that gives us the peace and assurance to cope daily with life's varied demands and many decisions. There is a story in the Hebrew Scriptures that illustrates this truth. God chose King Saul to rule over Israel, but Saul was a disappointment to God. In 1 Samuel 16:25, we read that the Spirit of the Lord left King Saul. And when that happened, Saul was filled with depression and fear. I know lots of people who are filled with depression and fear. I believe they have let the Holy Spirit slip out of their lives. It is the Holy Spirit that gives a lift to our lives and helps us

stand on higher ground. Without that Holy Spirit actively living and moving and having being in our lives, then we become a barren desert.

A mother and child once stood looking at the beautiful picture of Jesus standing at the door knocking. After a moment of thought, the mother said, “I wonder why they don’t let him in.” The child considered this and then replied, “The reason they don’t let him in is that they are down in the cellar and they can’t hear him knocking.” My brothers and sisters, it is the Holy Spirit that lifts us out of the cellars of life by giving us this Divine inner presence of the power and purpose of God.

Do you see now why this doctrine of the Trinity is so important to us? God the Father, our creator, sustainer, the Source of all that is or was or will ever be. God the Son our Savior, our Redeemer, the one who gave His life for us that we might know how much God loves us. God the Holy Spirit, the evidence of the indwelling Christ and our strength our enabler in life’s daily crises. This is the meaning of the Trinity. This is the truth that allows us to live our lives as a follower of Jesus the Christ. God has come down; Christ has died for us and on the third day was resurrected; the Holy Spirit is waiting to come into the lives of all who seek to follow Jesus, as evidence of God’s presence.

Here is our challenge this week. So, why would you settle for a knapsack instead of a parachute? Why would you settle for a parachute when there is a *Paraclete*? A parachute gently lowers us to the ground; a *Paraclete*, which is the Biblical word for the Spirit, lifts us up to the heavens. I pray that you accept this challenge. Please allow that same Holy Spirit of Jesus Christ into your life today and do so in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.