



THE EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH OF OUR SAVIOR

SABBATH SURVIVAL KIT



THE HOLY TRINITY

SUNDAY, JUNE 3, 2007

Early Christians began to speak of the one God in three persons in order to describe more fully the wonder of salvation. God is above us, beside us, within us. God is our loving Father, our savior Jesus, our companion Spirit. To be baptized in this name is to enter into God's community. Two commemorations mark the church's calendar today. The deaths of the Martyrs of Uganda in 1886 led to a much stronger Christian presence in that country. And Pope John XXIII, who died on this day in 1963, convened the Second Vatican Council, which became a powerful tool for the Holy Spirit's renewal of the church in the latter third of the twentieth century.

PRAYER OF THE DAY

God of heaven and earth, before the foundation of the universe and the beginning of time you are the triune God: Author of creation, eternal Word of salvation, life-giving Spirit of wisdom. Guide us to all truth by your Spirit, that we may proclaim all that Christ has revealed and rejoice in the glory he shared with us. Glory and praise to you, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, now and forever.

FIRST LESSON - PROVERBS 8:1-4, 22-31

Does not wisdom call, and does not understanding raise her voice? On the heights, beside the way, at the crossroads she takes her stand; beside the gates in front of the town, at the entrance of the portals she cries out: "To you, O people, I call, and my cry is to all that live. The Lord created me at the beginning of his work, the first of his acts of long ago. Ages ago I was set up, at the first, before the beginning of the earth. When there were no depths I was brought forth, when there were no springs abounding with water. Before the mountains had been shaped, before the hills, I was brought forth—when he had not yet made earth and fields, or the world's first bits of soil. When he established the heavens, I was there, when he drew a circle on the face of the deep, when he made firm the skies above, when he established the fountains of the deep, when he assigned to the sea its limit, so that the waters might not transgress his command, when he marked out the foundations of the earth, then I was beside him, like a master worker; and I was daily his delight, rejoicing before him always, rejoicing in his inhabited world and delighting in the human race.

SECOND LESSON - ROMANS 5:1-5

Therefore, since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have obtained access to this grace in which we stand; and we boast in our hope of sharing the glory of God. And not only that, but we also boast in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us.

HOLY GOSPEL - JOHN 16:12-15

I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth; for he will not speak on his own, but will speak whatever he hears, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. He will glorify me, because he will take what is mine and declare it to you. All that the Father has is mine. For this reason I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you.

REFLECTION "A GOD OF SUFFERING WE CAN RELATE TO" ROMANS 5:1-5 PASTOR WAYNE ZSCHECH

"Come and follow me for the sake of the world." This is the theme of this year's New Jersey Synod Assembly meeting in East Brunswick this week. This Sunday we celebrate not a person, or an event in the life of the Church, but the doctrine of the Holy Trinity. Finally it is the Sunday on which we will recognize and bless our graduating high school seniors in worship. So as I sit at assembly writing this brief reflection I cannot help but think of how all three celebrations are truly connected.

Our Lord Jesus calls us from the waters of baptism to come and follow him for the sake of the world. Yet, we cannot follow our Lord unless we first have a relationship with him. And we come to have a relationship with our God first through the Holy Spirit who calls, gathers, and enlightens the church. Luther wrote in his Small Catechism that we cannot come to have faith in God or Christ except through the power of the Holy Spirit.

So it is first through our relationship with God the Holy Spirit poured out upon us in the waters of Holy Baptism that we come to have a relationship with God the Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior. It is the Holy Spirit who reveals to us our Savior testified to in Scripture, and received in the bread and wine of Holy Communion. In our relationship with Jesus we come to know what is to be truly human and completely dependent on the love of God.

Naturally then it is through Jesus that the love and will of God the Father is revealed to us in turn. Through Christ we come to know of God the Father's unconditional love for his children. Through Christ, the mercy of God the Father is shown by his indiscriminate service to any and all the poor, disenfranchised, and those who live on the periphery of life. Most of all, through our relationship with Christ, we come know of God's willingness to suffer for the sake of the world, and his victory over death in the resurrection.

It is this relationship with the Trinity that we celebrate this day in the life of Christ's church. And while the concept of a Triune God that is one in three persons has been described through a variety of inadequate examples or analogies (three states of water, three sides of a triangle) it is an example of relationship that helps us most.

I am one person. Yet, I am a son to my father, a father to my daughter, and a husband to my wife. My relationship to each is unique even though I am still only one person. My father will never relate to me as a father or a husband, although he can offer advice or his perspective as he shares that relationship with another. My daughter will never know me as son or husband, and likewise my wife will not treat me as a son or father. I am known by my relationships to each just as we know God as we relate to God who as Holy Spirit who calls, gathers, and sustains our relationship with God the Son who has saved us by his death and resurrection and reveals our heavenly Father who has created and sustains us in all life.

And the life our God sustains us for is a life that lives in the hope of the resurrection, even in the midst of suffering. While Christians boast in their one day sharing in the glory of God through the resurrection, it is our faith in the resurrection that allows us to simultaneously boast in our sufferings of life, knowing they will not have the last word. And in a world where the power of sin and death still have sway there is sure to be suffering we experience both as creatures of a broken world and those who proclaim a different reality than what we experience.

No one likes to suffer. In fact, in this country we often worship the false idol of comfort and ease that boasts of a life without suffering. We are tempted to follow the false prophets who proclaim a faith that is devoid of suffering for those who are "truly" faithful. We are tempted to believe the false claim that once you "give your life completely over to Christ you will know the blessings of God" and perceive that in terms of health and wealth.

This is not the truth either Jesus or Paul proclaim. Instead, we follow a Lord and Savior who went to the cross trusting completely in the power of the God of life to prevail over the power of death. And every Easter, and each week we celebrate that victory of God over death, and have our faith strengthened in the promise that the same is true for all those who are baptized into Christ's death and resurrection.

This is why we can boast in our suffering, as Paul writes to the Christians in Rome. We accept the suffering that comes from proclaiming God's reign over against the powers of sin and death that manifest themselves in our lives in many ways. When we're shunned by others for doing the right thing that is the cross we bear and suffering we endure for the sake of the gospel. When we go without the luxuries of life to provide for the needs of others it is the suffering we endure that builds a character of faith and hope in the promise of God's reign where hunger, thirst, nakedness, peril, or even death need not be feared any more.

Today we celebrate our relationship with the Triune God who is first revealed by the pouring out of the Holy Spirit who then reveals Jesus Christ, who in turn reveals the Father. Through our relationship with our God in three persons we come to have faith in the resurrection and God's victory over death. It is that faith that then gives us the ability to not only boast in our hope of sharing in God's glory, but even boasting in the suffering we are sure to experience as we come and follow our Lord for the sake of the world, trusting that God's reign is the one that rules supreme in our lives and the lives of the whole world.

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

Let us pray for the church, the world, and all those in need. God of grace, we give thanks for your Son's presence among us even before the created world. Bless us by your Spirit that we may come to know you more fully.

God of all creation, we give you thanks for giving us dominion over the works of your hands. Guide us in faithfully caring for all creatures, that we might rightfully serve their needs.

God of majesty, comfort all those affected by widespread illness and disease. We pray especially for those living in Africa whose families are alienated as a result of the HIV/AIDS epidemic.

God of mercy, bless your servants who continually bear witness even in their suffering and grant hope to those who live in hopelessness. Comfort all the sick, that all may have peace.

God of wisdom, we give you thanks for all who are graduating this year.. Give them knowledge and discernment of vocation that they might serve you throughout their lives.

God of life, we give you thanks for the lives of all the saints, especially John the 23rd, bishop of Rome, and the martyrs of Uganda, whom we commemorate today. May we follow their example and seek to worship you above all things in the confidence of Christ.

Into your hands, gracious God, we commend all for whom we pray, trusting in your mercy; through Jesus Christ our Savior. Amen.

BLESSING

Jesus is the vine and we are the branches. May you be rooted and grounded in his love. Amen.