

SERIES B: The Holy Trinity

May 30, 2021

John 3:1-17

In This Way the Trinity Loves

Our Gospel reading tells us, “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. ”

Love is expressed by giving something of value. The mode of expressing love adapts to the object of our love such as a dear friend or a beloved child. Expressing love to your spouse may be through the mode of quality time, if he feels love and values quality over other modes like compliments or gifts.

However, the ultimate mode of love is to give your life for the sake of your beloved. In our OT reading, Isaiah didn’t feel loved when he saw a vision of heaven centered on the King, the LORD of hosts, sitting upon his throne.

Rather he felt his sin before the Holy, Holy, Holy LORD. It was not until the Holy Yahweh sent a seraph to touch the mouth of Isaiah with a burning coal “taken with tongs from the altar” that Isaiah felt the Triune God’s love and mercy.

Isaiah knew he deserved God’s present and eternal punishment, but God had taken away his guilt and his sin was atoned for. So he responds in joyous love, replying “Here am I! Send me” to the Trinity’s question “Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?”

When you and I are forgiven by God, we also receive and partake in joyous love, like Isaiah, and say “Here am I! Send me.”

For this joyous love to be given, which flows from forgiveness and eternal life in Christ, the Father demonstrates his love for the world in this way: by giving his one and only begotten Son. In verse 16 of the Gospel according to St. John, we heard that God “so” loved the world.

The word “so” (*houtōs*) in Greek doesn’t mean “so much,” rather it means “in this way.” Therefore, if we are to translate verse 16 more accurately we hear that “God loved the world *in this way*, that he gave his unique one and only begotten Son.”

So only through Jesus, the Son, do we see the Trinity—for God the Father loves the world by giving His only Son, who sends the Holy Spirit to give eternal life to sinners.

1.

To save fallen people, God loves the world in this way: he gave his Son to become en-fleshed like us, except without sin.

The Father sent his Son into the world not as a spirit, but as the God-Man. The Athanasian Creed was written, in part, against Apollinaris who falsely taught that Jesus was not a genuine human creature, i.e. that Jesus did not have both a body and a rational soul.

The Creed teaches us that “it is also necessary for everlasting salvation that one faithfully believe the incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ ... [who] is at the same time, both God and man” (27-28).

The Holy Spirit caused the Virgin Mary to be conceived with her God and Saviour. The Spirit fashioned the body and soul of Christ in the womb of Mary.

What eternal benefit would it be to you and me if Christ Jesus was not born of the Virgin? If the Son of God did not take on flesh, then we would have remained in our sins, under God’s condemnation.

For without becoming like us, he could not lower himself to be under the Law since God is above the Law, which itself comes from his holy nature. This means that the Son of God could not have lived, suffered, or died for the sins of the world, in our stead.

That kind of Christ is an Anti-Christ, a phantom, of the devil, who works ignorance and unbelief in the those living in darkness from receiving the light of the resurrected and ascended Jesus Christ.

The world did not receive or believe in the Son of God. So in their rejection, they purposed to kill the Son of the Creator of the universe.

2.

Even so, God still demonstrates his love in this way: he gave his only Son, whom he loves dearly, to suffer and die on the cross to save fallen mankind.

To save sinners, haters, murderers, the Father willed that the Son be given into their hands—to do evil works that they believed to be good works for God (Lk. 22:42). So the world spat on him, struck him, and falsely accused him.

Like the apostles, we may have not spat or struck Jesus, but our sins weighed heavy on his innocent shoulders on the cross. And the Spirit guided the Son to be lifted up on the cross.

As the Spirit was present in our Lord's watery baptism, so the Spirit was present in our Saviour's bloody baptism.

On his way to be baptized for the sins of the whole world, the Lamb of God followed the will of His Father and was crucified for our sins. Isaiah saw a seraph take a coal from the altar with tongues by God's command.

By the Father's salvific command, he sends not a seraph but his Son to the altar. Jesus doesn't take a coal from it, but lies on the altar of the cross to take away your guilt and your sins!

And not only our sins, but the Lamb has obtained eternal life for all fallen mankind! In Christ, the heaviness of guilt and sin are lifted from our tired shoulders.

3.

God continues to love the world today in this way: he gives his Son to sinners through the holy coals of Scripture and Sacraments.

The Father established the Word and Sacraments in order for us to be born again from above as his dear little ones who are confident and joyous in the saving knowledge that the Triune God dwells in us as living temples.

Knowing and trusting that we are truly God's little ones is an invaluable gift of love, even, and perhaps especially, when you are suffering or when you become more helpless like an infant in your older age—unable to move around like you were able to when you were younger, or to sleep like a child in the comfort of a loving and godly home (Acts 2:37–42; Gal 3:26–27).

Christ is given through the Word preached and Holy Baptism as holy coals that take away all guilt and sin. They are burning holy coals of the cross for on it the God-Man, our Lord and Messiah, died in your stead and mine—accomplishing the Trinity's goal: the salvation of your souls and bodies.

So we will know our God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—into a restored everlasting paradise on which God will continue to make known the riches of his glory for us in Christ (Col. 1:27).

Your glory is to be called by the Father before the world and all creatures as “My child,” to be called “My beloved,” to be called “sons [and daughters] of the living God” (Rom. 9:24-26).

And shortly we, who have been called together in this house, will celebrate and receive a taste of heaven on earth: the feast of love that Christ gives you and me in His Holy Supper.

The Son of God, our Lord and Christ, gives his body and blood with the bread and wine to take away your sins and guilt, and to strengthen your faith in him and your love for him and each other. Amen.