

Overview: The Bible clearly teaches us that we have one undivided God. Yet there are three distinct persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, who are all fully God. In this God alone we find our beginning, our redemption, and our restoration to everlasting holiness.

Suggested Service is Service of the Word (CW p. 38).

Suggested Hymns: 193 “Come, Now, Almighty King”

195 “Holy, Holy, Holy! Lord God Almighty”

194 “Oh, that I Had a Thousand Voices”

239 “Glory Be to God the Father”

* Please feel free to sing additional hymns from the Trinity section: CW 191-195.

Prayer of the Day: Almighty God and Father, dwelling in majesty and mystery, filling and renewing all creation by your eternal Spirit, and manifesting your saving grace through our Lord Jesus Christ: in mercy cleanse our hearts and lips that, free from doubt and fear, we may ever worship you, one immortal God, with your Son and the Holy Spirit, living and reigning, now and forever.

First Lesson: Genesis 1:1—2:3 By his command, God created our universe in six ordinary days. Every created thing received the commendation, “Very good,” by him who is perfect in holiness. God set the seventh day aside as holy because on it he rested from his work. Although the work of creation is primarily ascribed to the Father, we know that “the Word” (John 1:3) and “the Spirit of God” (Genesis 1:2) were also active in creation. The doctrine of the Trinity was already revealed in the first chapter of the Bible when the three distinct persons of the Godhead agreed to create the special object of his love: “Let us make man in our image” (Genesis 1:26).

Psalm is Psalm 150 (CW p. 122) Our Triune God used his mighty power to create our universe. When we fell from grace, he descended with his power to save us.

Second Lesson: II Corinthians 13:11-14 St. Paul encourages us to live in harmony with one another and openly to express unity in faith. The apostle amplifies the joy of fellowship with like-minded believers. This fellowship is possible only through the love of the Father, who sent his Son to redeem us, and the Holy Spirit, who draws us together in the one true faith.

Verse of the Day: Alleluia. Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory.
Alleluia. (Isaiah 6:3)

Gospel: Matthew 28:16-20 In the wake of his resurrection victory, our Savior uses his authority to give his disciples a rescue mission of universal scope. Jesus arms his disciples with the means of grace. By “baptizing them” and “teaching them” all nations receive the redeeming work of the Son.

Prayer: CW p. 127 or p. 42. Lord’s Prayer: CW p. 43.

OUR GREAT AND GLORIOUS GOD

HOLY TRINITY

MY DEAR CHRISTIAN FRIENDS,

How do you describe or explain the one true and Triune God to someone who does not know your God? How do you explain that you believe that there is only one God, but that there are three persons? How do you explain that the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are all God, but that they are all only one God? How do you explain to others the mystery of the Trinity, that there is only one God, but there are three persons?

There are many ways that people have attempted to explain or to picture the Triune God. Some would picture three leaflets on a three leaf clover. Others picture the Trinity like a cord having three strands wound tightly together to make one cord. Some use a triangle, showing one being and three different sides to that one being.

Others try to explain the Trinity by pointing out what he is not. They point out, for example, that the Triune God is not like the gods of Eastern religions or the gods of ancient mythology. He is not the god of the Mormons, or the Jehovah's Witnesses, or of Judaism; for all these deny the essence of the Trinity in unity and the unity of the Trinity. The Triune God is also not the god of the New Age, for he is not subject to the imaginations of the mind of man. Furthermore, God is not nature nor is he subject to nature. Finally, we might say that one unique truth about our God is that like no other God, the Triune God is not subject to our understanding of him.

Whatever we might say that God is and whatever we might say that God is not still falls short of actually defining the Triune God. In fact, it has been said that if anyone claims to understand the mystery of the Trinity, they are lying. God's greatness and God's essence is not something that can be fully comprehended by the mind of man. Even the wisest philosophers down through the ages could not fathom in their minds the unique characteristics of the triune God. For this reason, apart from faith wrought by the Holy Spirit, a person cannot and will not acknowledge that the Father, Son and Holy Spirit is the one true God.

While we may not be able to comprehend the power the majesty and the glory of our God, we certainly can and do know him. God has revealed himself to us in his creation, to our consciences and on the pages of Holy Scripture. God has revealed himself to be unlike any god that the human mind has invented. No other god has the power or the desire that all people be saved for eternity. No other god offers to man the free and faithful grace that God offers. No other god gives his only Son for sinful mankind. No other god releases mankind from all demands, from guilt and shame. Our God is like no other god. He is the one true and Triune God.

Today in our familiar text from Matthew, we again have opportunity to ponder: OUR GREAT AND GLORIOUS GOD.

- I. His authority
- II. His love

First we look at the authority of God. Our text says: *“Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. When they saw him, they worshipped him; but some doubted.”* Jesus had promised on at least three occasions that he would see his disciples in Galilee. We are not sure when he told them just where to go, to this particular mountain in Galilee, but there they are at Jesus’ command. We notice how they fell down and worshipped him. The one other example that we have of the disciples displaying such worship is when Jesus calmed the storm.

The disciples had seen Jesus. They knew he had risen from the dead. They knew in their hearts that he was the one whom God had sent to live and then to die as the promised Messiah. They knew he was true God and they fell down and worshipped him. What may trouble us here was that some doubted. We are not sure what it was that they doubted or exactly who it was doing the doubting. The one disciple, whom we know as doubting Thomas, already had his doubts cleared up. So the question remains, who is doubting what?

There are two explanations. There were many on the mountain that day. It is said that there were 500 “disciples” there to see Jesus. So when it says that some doubted, was it some of the five hundred there that day or some of the eleven disciples? If it some of the five hundred, this may very well have been the first time they saw Jesus since the resurrection and like Thomas previously, they still had their doubts. If it was some of the eleven, the chosen disciples who had already seen Jesus on several occasions; then it is thought that perhaps some doubted because Jesus was yet some distance away and they weren’t sure yet that it was Jesus.

In any case, Jesus says, *“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.”* Jesus makes a claim that only the true God can make. Jesus claims to be the Son of Man who was given all authority by the Ancient of Days, as promised in Daniel 7. The one, who had reduced demons to beggars and caused the fearful to plead for his departure during his ministry, now claims the full power and authority that was rightfully his as God.

On three occasions in his ministry Jesus’ power and authority was questioned. When Jesus did answer such challenges he usually did so with a demonstration of his power and authority, like when he healed the paralytic.

Remember also when Pontius Pilate told Jesus that he had the power to crucify or to set Jesus free, Jesus reminded him that he had no authority except that which had been given to him. All power and authority rests with our great and glorious God. After Jesus’ resurrection, this power and authority was again returned to Jesus as being true God along with the Father and the Holy Spirit.

The words of Jesus give great insight to you and me when we may be faced with doubts and fears concerning our God, his love for us, and his concern for our lives here on earth and forever in heaven. Remember that God has all authority in heaven and earth and uses that power and authority for the physical and spiritual well-being of his children here on earth and forever in heaven. Our great and glorious God has revealed to us his power and authority over all things that we might find comfort and courage and strength of faith in our great and glorious God. It is the same power and authority that God

displayed when he created all things. God uses that same power and authority in our lives and for our benefit and blessing.

Our great and glorious God also shows himself to us in his love when Jesus says, *“Go and make disciples of all nations baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit...”* Jesus shows the love of God in this command. It is what we call the gospel imperative. Yes, certainly it is a command from God. This command, however, is unlike the commands of other gods in that it is for the benefit and blessing of mankind.

Our great and glorious God shows his love for us in that unlike any other god, our God has the desire that all people should come to the knowledge of Jesus as their Savior and that all people should inherit God’s blessings of eternal life. Furthermore, the command not only conveys our God’s loving desire but also gives us the tools with which to carry it out. He gives us the means of grace in Word and sacrament.

Here Jesus institutes baptism. In making disciples of all nations we are to baptize in the name of the Triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. In the simple and familiar words of Jesus to Nicodemus, we understand what it means to be baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Jesus said to Nicodemus (John 3:16) *“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son that whoever believes and is baptized shall have eternal life.”* In those words we have shown to us the love of our heavenly Father in sending his Son, we have the Son’s gift of eternal life by his death and resurrection, and we have the Holy Spirit’s gift of faith to believe this gospel message. Our great and glorious God has revealed himself in his love for sinful mankind.

Not only do we see the love of our great and glorious God in baptism, we also see his power. It is not the water that does such wonderful things in baptism, but the Word of God. It is the same power of the Word that created this world and sustains it to this day. It is the same power of Word that brings sinful creatures to faith in a loving and saving God. It is the same authority by which you and I will be judged righteous on the great and glorious day of the Lord. God’s power and God’s love are intertwined for the benefit and blessing of the crown of his creation.

God’s love does not end with our baptism. Notice that Jesus continues by saying: *“and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.”* The power of God’s Word that is present in baptism is still present in his Word and is to be taught in all its fullness. Jesus knew the power of the Word and he wanted his disciples, even down to you and me, to know how important his Word is. It is not only that we might know the true God by his Word, but that we might also know the power of God’s Word for our life and for our salvation.

Jesus concludes with the comfort that he will be with us always, to the very end of the age. To the completion of our lives and to the very end of the world, Jesus has promised to be with us. He who has all authority and power is not only able to make such a promise to you and me, but is also able to keep it. May you and I, as we carry out our Lord’s command to make disciples of all nations, be strengthened and comforted by the power, authority and love of our great and glorious Triune God. AMEN.