

Pastor Madelynne Lindsey

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Let the Father of the Spirit Speak – John 16:12-15

Let us pray: O God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit in whose name we are baptized and into whose fellowship we have been received. May the Spirit of the Lord calm our minds by the words of my lips and in the meditations of our hearts. Speak, O Lord, for your servants listen. Amen

Well, here it is Father's Day again. It is another of the holidays created by the greeting card companies to increase our guilt and their income. I am always amazed at how we treat Father's Day.

When my youngest son worked in a card shop when he was a teenager, he told me the owner of the shop told him not to bother putting out a lot of Father's Day cards because they could use the same ones from previous years. Father's Day cards were not as popular as Mother's Day cards.

On Mother's Day we often hear sermons exalting the role of the mother in the family. Mothers are encouraged, praised and lifted up as the most important person in the home. And, we should thank the Lord for godly mothers.

Well dads, I have two pieces of news for you today. First, you are special too! You are just as important in the home as mom and I thank the Lord for every one of you.

Second, you do not have to listen to a sermon on this Father's Day telling you how you could do a better job as a father. Today, I want to preach about the Most Wonderful Father of them all.

I want to preach about the One Jesus referred to as "My Father." But, when Jesus talked about the Father, He did not just call Him "My Father." He also called God "Our Father." Thus, Jesus clearly shows us that those who believe in Jesus share the same relationship with God in Heaven that he himself shares.

But today is Trinity Sunday also and many books have been written on the deepest mystery of the Christian faith-God the Holy Trinity. Our minds are limited and restricted; they cannot possibly know all there is to know about the endless and unlimited "God in three persons, blessed Trinity."

Yet when all is said and done, God the Holy Trinity remains our deepest mystery. Who is this God that we worship? Well, one way we speak of God is as the Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier; or Father (and in recent times also Mother), Son and Holy Spirit.

Speaking of the Trinity reminds me of a joke I read:

After a major downpour filled all the potholes in the streets and alleys, a young mother watched her two little boys playing in a puddle through her kitchen window. The older of the two, a five-year old, grabbed his younger brother by the back of his head and shoved his face into the water hole.

As the boy recovered and stood laughing and dripping, the mother runs to the yard in a panic. 'Why on earth did you do that to your little brother?!' she asks as she shook the older boy in anger.

'We were just playing "church mommy," he said. "And I was baptizing him in the name of the Father, the Son, and in the hole he goes."

Speaking of holes with water in them, there is a story about one of Christianity's most famous theologians and bishops, Augustine, who lived in North Africa in the fourth and fifth century.

As the story has it, one day Augustine was walking along the beach by the ocean and pondering the deep mystery of God the Holy Trinity. He met a boy there on the beach who had dug a hole in the sand and kept busy running back and forth from the hole to the ocean; collecting water and pouring it into the hole.

Augustine was curious about this, so he asked the boy: "What are you doing? The boy replied: "I am going to pure the entire ocean into this hole." Augustine then said: "That is impossible, the whole ocean will not fit into your hole." And the boy answered Augustine: "Neither can the immeasurable God, the Holy Trinity, fit into your limited mind."

The creator God we say is all knowing (omniscient), all powerful (omnipotent), and all-present (omnipresent). I'd like to jog your memories for a few moments. Most of you, especially the older members may remember the TV series "Perry Mason" or perhaps you've read some of the Perry Mason novels that were written by Erle Stanley Gardner.

Perry Mason tried 270 murder cases on television, and more in the novels and made-for-TV movies, and only lost two of them. But in both of those cases, he came through with new information and at the last moment reversed the verdict and cleared his client.

The mere mention of his name struck the fear of God into the hearts of any prosecutor. Well folks, there is one prosecutor that even Perry Mason cannot beat, and that is the Holy Spirit.

Today as we celebrate Trinity Sunday, we can think of the Trinity as a courtroom. God is the judge, the Holy Spirit is the prosecutor, and Jesus is our defense lawyer. When the prosecutor, the Holy Spirit, presents his case, no one will have any defense on their own;

However, everyone can have a defense because Jesus Christ has offered to take any case for free if he is allowed to, because he has already paid the ultimate price for our defense. Jesus died on the cross so that we might have eternal life.

God is our mediator/arbiter, Jesus represents our side of the dispute, and the Holy Spirit becomes our advocate. The concept of the Trinity is a difficult concept for us to grasp, and part of this problem lies in how it is presented in John's Gospel.

John wrote the Gospel for an audience that was primarily Greek. The Greek were leaders in science, thought and philosophy. In other words, Greek society was very intelligent and highly sophisticated, especially in terms of understanding abstract concepts.

This is one reason why John's Gospel is very theological in nature. Trinitarian Theology is complicated for a reason. The very complications of the Trinity are designed to bring us closer to God.

We don't know everything about God, but we know everything about Him that we need to know. The Scriptures assure us of that. We do not have to understand everything, spiritual or non-spiritual the minute we become adults and that includes the Trinity.

We know enough to save us. God pours out grace upon us, in abundance and consistently, whether we realize it or not. The Holy Spirit helps us and the Church to understand all of what Jesus said, especially what he said about God.

The Trinity is one of the most fascinating aspects of Christian theology but, is also one of the most controversial. It is a mystery to us because it is a reality that is above our human ability to understand things.

We can begin to grasp it on our own, but we must really discover it through worship, symbol and faith. In essence, the Trinity is the belief that the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are somehow distinct from one another, yet at the same time they are completely united in will and tasks.

In order to understand it, we must live in the light of its implications for our human lives. The relationship that exists among the three divine persons suggest to us that we can know God through our relationships-not only in God's relationship to us, but to the entire created world.

Despite its abstract, theological nature, John's Gospel has an ordinary, down-to-earth purpose; namely, to lead people to Christ. John was speaking of spiritual truth rather than the philosophical, historical or scientific truth.

He gave us a method of determining what is spiritually true and what is not. The fundamental criterion of truth for the church is what it must always witness to Christ and reveal God's purpose that love shall be of first importance in all relationships throughout the whole of creation.

In today's Gospel reading, Jesus is setting the stage for his upcoming death, resurrection and ascension. The disciples are understandably quite terrified. Their lives are about to take a dramatic turn. They are quite concerned about the future. How would they continue to do his work without his presence and guidance?

That was a valid question, and it is the same question many Christians have today. How are we going to do Christ's work in our society? How are we to care for the less fortunate and spread the Good News? Fortunately for us and the disciples, Jesus had an answer.

He promised to send another advocate or helper-the Holy Spirit. The Spirit would not be bound by Jesus' limitations of time and space. Whereas Jesus could only travel slowly and teach those within the sound of his voice, the Holy Spirit could be present anywhere and everywhere throughout the world and throughout history.

Jesus knew that his disciples could not face the reality of his death and resurrection or the reality of their own persecutions for doing his work. They were too weak at that time to face that reality. It would be the job of the Holy Spirit to guide them and strengthen them for the challenges they would face.

Many of us face the same concerns today. We often feel that we are too weak to do God's work on our own, and in fact we are weak. We cannot do it alone. We need the teachings and the strengthening power that the Holy Spirit provides.

The Spirit will guide us in our life's journey. It will be the still, small voice inside of us that says either, "Don't do that or go for it!" He will guide us in the right direction like a built-in compass.

Jesus tells us that the Spirit will lead us into the truth. The Spirit will speak with the authority of God, telling us what God is thinking. The Spirit will give Jesus glory because he will translate what Jesus has to say to us.

The great evangelist D.L. Moody once planned to have a campaign in England. An elderly pastor protested, "Why do we need this Mr. Moody"? He's uneducated, inexperienced, etc. Who does he think he is anyway? Does he think he has a monopoly on the Holy Spirit?

A younger, wiser pastor rose and responded, "No, but the Holy Spirit has a monopoly on Mr. Moody." The Holy Spirit acts as our helper. He lives inside us and knows us even better than we know ourselves. He works 24 hours and day 7 days a week to enable us to be the person God wants us to be and to help us grow in the likeness of Christ.

There is no problem that he can't handle. He will help us get through our troubles and will also use our burdens to teach us about God's love, power and wisdom. So, what are we to do with this doctrine of the Holy Trinity?

I want us to be reminded every time we hear about it or ponder it that the Good News is that not that we have God all figured out, but that God had us figured out. And you know what? He loves us anyway, and he forgives our sins in spite of everything he knows about us.

Remember God is behind us, ahead of us and, beside us leading us to the day in heaven when all the mysteries will be revealed, all you must do is trust in the Holy Spirit, it will guide you. Amen.

Let us pray: Lord God, our Father, you are not far away from any of us, for in you we live and move and exist and you live in us through your Holy Spirit. Amen.