

"Go and make disciples"

A sermon by the Rev. Frances Savill
Sunday June 7, 2020

Matthew 28:16-20

This morning I'd like to spend a few minutes talking about the Trinity and thinking about why it is important.

Jesus tells us that we are to baptize people in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, the Holy Trinity.

But why?

Why does it matter that God is three in one?

Why do we baptize in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit?

The Trinity isn't some complicated distraction from the simple gospel—it's actually part of the gospel.

Consider John 3:16, one of the most famous and simple gospel statements in the whole New Testament.

And think carefully about what it says: "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish, but have eternal life."

Did you ever notice that even in John 3:16 you're already wading into trinitarian waters?

Consider all the Trinity-related truths stated or implied in this one simple verse. I can think of at least six:

1. Two of the three persons are explicitly mentioned: God and his only begotten Son.
2. The fact that God has a Son tells us that he's a Father. It also suggests that when Scripture speaks simply of "God," it's often referring specifically to the Father.
3. The fact that the Father gave his Son tells us they're distinct persons. The Father can't be the Son if he gave the Son.
4. It says something about how the Father loves his Son that giving him would be the ultimate demonstration of his fatherly love.
5. The fact that Jesus is referred to as God's only Son suggests there's something unique about Jesus's sonship.

Scripture teaches that God has other sons and daughters (Job 2:1; Heb. 2:10).

John has already told us that when we believe in Jesus, we become God's children. So how can he say that Jesus is God's only Son?

Answer: because while we are sons and daughters by grace, Jesus is *the only* Son by nature.

We become God's sons and daughters by adoption.

Jesus doesn't become God's Son—he simply *is* God's Son, begotten from the Father before all worlds, God from God, light from light, begotten and not made.

6. John 3:16 tells us that this is how we receive eternal life—by the Father giving his Son.

Salvation is trinitarian. The Father has an only, eternally begotten Son, and in his love for us God sends that Son for us.

The Son of God becomes a human, so that we might become children of God.

And then, the Father and Son send their Spirit to dwell in us so we can experience this new life. The Trinity and the gospel have the same shape.

This is how God saves us—by sending his Son and Spirit.

Our salvation hangs on these two sendings. Without them, God would still be *a* Father, but he wouldn't be *our* Father.

He would still have *a* Son, but he wouldn't have many daughters and sons.

Jesus comes to us, comes as one of us, to take us into himself, into his relationship with the Father, and bring us into the communion of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

It has been likened to a great dance.

The Father, Son and Holy Spirit are in perfect fellowship, perfect community, three persons, one dance.

And the Son, Jesus comes and takes us by the hand and draws us into this dance – bringing us into this perfect fellowship that He shares and is ours because he is both fully God and fully human.

The Trinity matters because this is who God is. It's who God always was and would've been even if there had been no you, no me, and no heavens and earth.

Jesus and the Holy Spirit are co-eternal with the Father.

The question is, "Do you want to know God?" Because as Jesus said, "This is eternal life: that they know you the only God and Jesus Christ whom you have sent" (John 17:3).

The kind of God we have determines the kind of relationship we will have with God.

The God of the Trinity is an all-sufficient fountain of joy and love.

Jesus spoke of himself as a source of life-giving water, in him is fullness of joy.

The God of the Gospel was never lonely, because even in the beginning, before anything made was made, God was in community.

You and I aren't the result of some man-shaped hole in the Father's heart; rather, you and I represent the overflow of the Father's eternal love for his Son—as though the Father had said, "Son, this love of ours is just too good to keep to ourselves. So together with our eternal Spirit,

let us make woman and man in our own image, so that others might see and experience our love.

How could God *be* love, unless God has always loved as part of his essential nature?
Love needs an object.
God cannot be love unless God is Triune.

The Trinity teaches us that salvation is God giving *himself* to us in creation and redemption.

Jesus who is coeternal with the Father before all worlds was sent by the Father into this world, to live and die for us to give us life.

And the same Spirit who proceeded from the Father and the Son from all eternity was sent by the Father and the Son into this world, to live inside us and bring us to Christ—and through Christ to the Father—so that we might be taken into his family, surrounded by his life and love, to glorify and enjoy him forever.

This is more than forgiveness.
It's joining an eternal family.
It's being conformed to the image of the Son by the Spirit (Rom. 8:29) and becoming a partaker of the divine nature (2 Pet. 1:4).

This is the Holy Trinity.
This isn't just a doctrine; this is our life.
It's more than just a mystery or a mind-bending math problem; this is our God, who loves and gave his Son for us (John 3:16), who loves us and gave himself for us (Gal. 2:20), who loves us and lives inside of us (Rom. 5:5).

According to Matthew's gospel, Jesus as he was preparing to leave his disciples, called them up on a mountaintop.

In Matthew's gospel, every great revelation, every great momentous occasion happens on a mountain top.

Jesus commissioned the disciples –
Listen to the words and consider that Jesus has spoken these words to the church through the ages, and Jesus now speaks them to us: *"Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you."*

Then he added this great promise to those he commissioned: ***Remember, I am with you always.
Right here, right now, and forever.***

Thanks be to God!