

Sermon Draft

Text: Acts 2:14a, 22–36

Sermon: “Trinity Sunday 2024”

The second half of the church year, the Time of the Church, begins with the festival of the Holy Trinity. Immediately following our recollection and celebration of Pentecost, this Sunday particularly focuses on the identity of God as he has revealed himself to us. He is one God in three coequal Persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Worship does not focus on the Trinity as an abstraction or theological system but receives from, and responds to, the true, living God. The Trinity is not what God is but who God is.

Each of our readings reveals the Holy Trinity in action. The Psalm extols the majesty of Yahweh, who is worshiped in splendor, might, and holiness. The Old Testament Reading, Isaiah 6:1–8, marks the beginning of the prophet’s call. Isaiah sees a glorious revelation of God on his throne. God fills both the temple and the heavens. We hear the worship of the seraphim: **“Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory!”** (v 3).

This glorious revelation is terrifying to the sinner until God acts to forgive. Like Isaiah, on our own we rightly fall on our faces and cry out, “**Woe is me! For I am lost**” (v 5). Like Isaiah, we receive God’s forgiveness and holiness through Christ.

The Gospel recounts Nicodemus’s nighttime visit to Jesus (John 3:1–17). Jesus reveals each of the triune Persons and their work. The Father sends his only-begotten Son to save the world. Sinners are born again by water and the Spirit to have faith in Christ and receive the salvation that he has won. The Second Reading from Acts, the text for this sermon, likewise reveals the triune God in action.

We should always proclaim God’s full identity as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Particularly on this day, we proclaim and celebrate that he has revealed himself to us in this personal way.

Roll the dice and take your chance. When your number's up, it's up. Do you feel lucky? Well, do you? Is that how we live, how God operates? Is life random, or does God have a plan? Many people think life is a collection of random events and chances. They see no plan or direction for things that happen. Life is what you make of it. Without God, science proposes that despite amazing improbabilities, life evolved from millions of random events. Where we are born, what our life's circumstances are, whom we meet and know and love? These may be seen as just random events or lucky circumstances. If the world is really nothing but randomness, there is no inherent purpose to anything. Meaning, if there is any, is what we create ourselves. And many people struggle to create anything of meaning or significance. But if everything is random, then that self-made meaning is an illusion.

This is a tough way to live! There's nothing random about God. Christianity teaches that God doesn't deal in luck or random chance. We belong to a God of purpose and significance. This God reveals himself and his gracious plans to us.

That's very much the point of this Trinity Sunday we observe today.

On Trinity Sunday, we remember that God has revealed his nature and identity to us. Since he is God and we are creatures, we struggle to understand a being who is infinitely greater than we are.

Comprehending him is beyond the abilities of our limited minds. If we could fully understand God, that would likely be a sign that we made him up. He would fit into our thoughts and ideas. But the true and living God is greater than us, and a mystery.

Yet God reveals himself to us. We confess everything that Scripture teaches about God. There is only one God, and that God eternally exists in three coequal Persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

There are many ways for us to consider God and his revelation, but today, following Peter's sermon in Acts, we consider him through his works. Peter reveals the incredibly gracious work of God in his Pentecost sermon.

He shows us that there was nothing random about our salvation: God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit have a definite, gracious plan for each of us.

In God's work, we know him and his character, and we see the three persons of the Trinity in action, because God did have a definite plan. The need for this plan was sin.

The Old Testament Reading shows how a sinner reacts to God's holiness: in fear. So, God came to us in a way that need not terrify, the Second Person of the Trinity in Jesus Christ, but Peter proclaims, "***you crucified and killed [him] by the hands of lawless men***" (v 23). Because of that and every sin, we deserved death and an eternity separated from God. But God had a definite plan. Peter proclaims a wonder: God knew what was going to happen. He knew that we would sin, and he knew what redemption would cost. Yet he still went forward. He created. He redeemed. God had a definite plan for our redemption! The entire Trinity was involved in God's plan.

The Father foreknew and sent his only-begotten Son. Attested to Jesus' identity with mighty works and wonders and signs done through Jesus. Allowed Jesus to be crucified. Preserved Jesus from corruption (v 27) and raised him from the dead (v 24). Exalted Jesus to his right hand. Jesus' saving work was complete (v 33). Declared Jesus both Lord and Christ, Master and Savior (v 36).

The Son submitted to the Father's will and came to earth. Took on flesh, assuming our nature and sharing our weakness. Did the mighty works and wonders and signs, attesting his identity. Resisted all temptation and sin, and yet willingly took our sin upon himself. Became obedient to death on a cross. The Lord of all became the subject of all. Shared in God's definite plan and faithfully carried it out.

The Holy Spirit was poured out on Pentecost, the day this sermon of Peter was first preached. Gathered the crowd to hear Peter's message in their familiar languages. Testifies to Jesus through the Gospel.

We are born again of water and the Spirit. Speaks to us in the apostles' preaching, God's Holy Word. Continually calls, gathers, enlightens, sanctifies, and keeps us in the true faith.

This is God's definite plan. The Father, Son, and Spirit are one God, and each person works in grace and mercy to make us his own.

We do not fully understand the mystery of the Trinity, nor can we fathom the depth of the grace of God, who chooses to redeem like this. But we know our God. We know his grace. We marvel at his goodness. There is nothing random in our salvation. So, we worship the Trinity in Unity and the Unity in Trinity, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. One God, now and forever.

Amen