

Trinity Sunday 2020

"Stand In Awe of Your God"

Text: Acts 2:14a, 22-36

May the love of God the Father fill you with wonder; may the sacrifice of God the Son fill you with thanksgiving; and may the indwelling of God the Holy Spirit fill you with comfort, faith, and hope. Amen.

Fellow Christians: In our Old Testament reading for this morning we heard how our Triune God, about six thousand years ago, brought the universe into existence by the power of his Word. He said, and it was so. With what simple words such sublime truths were communicated to us. God simply called into existence such things as time, space, light, gravity, matter – even life itself. He declared, and it was so.

Do any of us really *understand* any of these things that God called into existence? Of course not. Not even close. Countless of the most brilliant minds have studied these things for an entire lifetime and have all come to the inevitable conclusion that there is far more that they don't know than what they do.

That's what we would expect, isn't it – that not only could man never fully comprehend God himself, but that we can't even fully understand his works and ways.

This morning we celebrate one aspect of our God in particular that no one fully understands – his Triune Nature. Though it's easy enough to speak of three-in-one (three Persons and yet one God) once we start to get into the specifics (as we did this morning in the Athanasian Creed) how quickly we founder.

Yet we believe in the Triune nature of our God. Why? Because God said so, in his Word.

Our text for this morning represents just one of those "God said so" proofs of that which we believe, even though we don't (and can't) fully understand it. That text is found in the Book of Acts, the Second Chapter:

ESV Acts 2:14a, 22-36 *But Peter, standing with the eleven, lifted up his voice and addressed them:...* ²² ¶ *"Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs that God did through him in your midst, as you yourselves know--* ²³ *this Jesus, delivered up according to the*

definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men. ²⁴ *God raised him up, loosing the pangs of death, because it was not possible for him to be held by it.* ²⁵ *For David says concerning him, "I saw the Lord always before me, for he is at my right hand that I may not be shaken;* ²⁶ *therefore my heart was glad, and my tongue rejoiced; my flesh also will dwell in hope.* ²⁷ *For you will not abandon my soul to Hades, or let your Holy One see corruption.* ²⁸ *You have made known to me the paths of life; you will make me full of gladness with your presence.'* ²⁹ ¶ *"Brothers, I may say to you with confidence about the patriarch David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day.* ³⁰ *Being therefore a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that he would set one of his descendants on his throne,* ³¹ *he foresaw and spoke about the resurrection of the Christ, that he was not abandoned to Hades, nor did his flesh see corruption.* ³² *This Jesus God raised up, and of that we all are witnesses.* ³³ *Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured out this that you yourselves are seeing and hearing.* ³⁴ *For David did not ascend into the heavens, but he himself says, "The Lord said to my Lord, Sit at my right hand,* ³⁵ *until I make your enemies your footstool.'* ³⁶ *Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified."*

So far the Word of our God. What a blessing to possess these words of timeless truth as our sure and constant guide. That our Triune God would bless our study of these perfect words, so we pray, **"Sanctify us by your truth, O Lord. Your word is truth."** Amen.

What a pure joy it is simply to worship our God, to fall on our knees in humble awe before him and to unreservedly praise, honor and glorify him. This is good. This is fitting, right, and utterly appropriate on absolutely any occasion – because he is worthy. So many things in life require careful balance. Not here. Here there need be no hesitancy, no reluctance, no apprehension, no measured restraint. Human beings simply cannot worship our God too much or too well.

Understand, however, that we don't worship our God because we fully grasp everything there is no know about him. We worship him, in part, because we don't. We acknowledge that he is so far above us, so much more powerful, wise, and grand than anything we mortals could ever fully comprehend. In fact that's part of what makes God worthy of

our worship – the very fact that we don't, and can't, get all there is to God.

But just here we see a growing and most troubling trend. There is a rising inclination in our society to reject the very existence of God simply because he cannot be explained scientifically or grasped intellectually. Man asks "*How can this be?*" and if the answer is not readily available, man dismisses the very concept of God. As man's understanding concerning how things work in God's incredible creation increases, man's tendency now is to worship the creation, according to his limited understanding of that creation, rather than the Creator himself.

On the one hand, this is most puzzling. Who wants to worship that which is on a par with himself? Isn't worship supposed to be reserved for that which is greater, grander, and more sublime – in the case of our God, infinitely so? And yet on the other hand this tendency to dismiss and reject the very existence of God is anything but surprising, for this is the very essence of our foolish, fallen nature from the very moment of our conception. It is the delight of Satan, into whose control every single one of us is naturally born. Every human soul was born profoundly foolish and spiritually ignorant – a natural enemy of God. More than even that, we were born with an inordinate love of self. In fact it is relatively easy for man to reject God because man is so enamored with himself. It's only natural then that if God doesn't seem to measure up to our own beliefs, instincts, and understanding, then man will invariably dismiss God and opt to believe and honor self, and he will naturally do so every single time.

So it is that when the Bible proclaims that God is one, and yet three separate and distinct persons, man naturally says, "*That's impossible. It makes no rational sense.*" and dismisses it out of hand. Man can't grasp how such a thing can possibly be true, so man naturally concludes that it is not true.

This sort of skepticism extends throughout the doctrines of Scripture. The virgin birth can't be true – rejected. The resurrection from the dead can't be true – rejected. The miracles, the two natures of Christ, the creation of all things from absolutely nothing by the power of God's Word alone – rejected, rejected, rejected.

God knew this about man, by the way. That's why in our text Peter articulated what God himself did to address this natural skepticism we all share: ***But Peter, standing with the eleven, lifted up his voice and addressed them:... ²² ¶ "Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs that God did through him in your midst, as you***

yourself know..." Do you see the impossible situation that God faced in connection with mankind and the sending of Jesus Christ? Jesus had to be set apart from all of the false messiahs that came before and would come after. God did this by the miraculous signs that were performed. Even Jesus' sworn enemies were perplexed by these miracles by the way, "*For how,*" they reasoned, "*could someone who does not have divine approval do such incredible things?*" And yet man now takes the very proof that God offered to verify Jesus' person, work, and office, and turns it into the very reason for rejecting him. Because they cannot rationally explain what happened, they deny that it ever did. Or, they reason, if it did happen once, why isn't it still happening today?

And, by the way, did you notice the profound difference in Peter's words in our text? That's the post-Pentecost Peter you're hearing, the Peter who was in possession of the promised outpouring of the Holy Spirit. These are the "***living waters***" that Jesus promised would flow from those hearts where the Holy Spirit now resides. Far from trying to prevent Jesus from paying his sin-debt on the cross, Peter here thrills to the fact that Jesus did just that. Gone forever is the old Peter. This is the Peter upon whose testimony God established his New Covenant Church. What you see here then is the glory of that gift we celebrated last week, the special gift of the Holy Spirit given to God's New Testament Church at Pentecost.

So then, we don't worship our God because we know or grasp him fully. In fact we freely admit that God is so far above us that there is undoubtedly infinitely more that we *don't* know about him than there is that we do. But you and I are obviously fine with that. That's why we worship him, our Triune God, and him alone.

Yet there is another reason, isn't there? We don't worship our God because we fully understand him, we worship him because he fully understands us.

Peter continues in our text: "***...this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men.***" Note this well. God knew all along that mankind would opt to kill its own Savior. That's just how perverse and unworthy is the entire human race. God knew that about us. Yet God decided to go forward with his plan anyway. With "***definite planning and foreknowledge***" God sent his Son to be killed by us – the very souls he came to save. He knew we would do it, but he also knew that there was no other way for us to avoid spending all eternity

in unspeakable agony. Why would he do such a thing? ***"God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son..."*** Again from Ephesians 2:4-7: ***"But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, ⁵ even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ--by grace you have been saved-- ⁶ and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, ⁷ so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus."***

We worship our God because he fully understands us, and yet, understanding us as he certainly does, he loved us with an impossible love – to the point that he sacrificed his dearest Treasure to spare us the punishment we so obviously deserved.

Consider just how amazing this truth really is. God knows everything about you. He knows your terrible, revolting thoughts. He hears the Godless things that come out of your mouth and he sees the sin that you manage to hide, at least for the most part, from other human beings. He knows your doubts, your faithless fears and anxieties, and your perverse pleasure in the temporal shine and fluff of this world. All this he knows about you – knows you better than you know yourself – and still he loves you, still he cares about you and for you, still he longs to have you with him for all eternity in heaven. Still he sent his Son, for you.

That's why we worship him, isn't it. The world is filled with doubt because of the demonstrations of his power. You and I are filled with faith and hope because of the demonstrations of his love. The world refuses to worship a God that it cannot fully comprehend. You and I worship him precisely because we cannot. You and I need to introduce the world to the God whose greatest attribute is his grace – his undeserved love for sinful, rebellious mankind. As amazing and incomprehensible as the creation of the universe in six days by the power of his Word alone truly is, Jesus' love for human sinners is greater. As astounding as the miracles, the Triune nature of our God, and the resurrection of the dead most certainly are, even more amazing is the fact that God now credits the perfection of his Son to sinners like us. As astounding as are such things as color and light, infinitely more so is the fact that God, in bringing us to saving faith through the power and indwelling of his own Holy Spirit, has removed our spiritual blindness and unbelief and has declared us to be his own children and heirs of heaven.

All of this has been given to you and me, freely, for Christ's sake. You want something to marvel at? Something to be amazed by? Start there. Amen.

Scripture Readings

^{ESV} **Genesis 1:1-5** In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. ² The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters. ³ And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. ⁴ And God saw that the light was good. And God separated the light from the darkness. ⁵ God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.

^{ESV} **Matthew 28:16-20** Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. ¹⁷ And when they saw him they worshiped him, but some doubted. ¹⁸ And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹ 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, ²⁰ teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

ST. PAUL EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

2510 E. Divide Ave. Bismarck, ND 58501

Parsonage and Office: (701) 223-4885 Cell: (701) 425-5483

Website: www.bismarcklutheran.org

Mark Johnson, President Angela Pfennig, Organist

Michael Roehl, Pastor

Trinity Sunday – June 7, 2020

The Opening Prayer by the Pastor

The Opening Hymn – 246 (Red Hymnal)

"Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty"

The Order of Service – Supplement page 12ff. (Brown Hymnal)

The Scripture Lessons: (Printed on the back page of this bulletin)

The Old Testament Lesson: (Genesis 1:1-5) Man universally makes God too small. We naturally tend to reduce him into something that fits our own human limitations. So it is that we note on this Trinity Sunday that man still puzzles over – and therefore routinely *rejects* – the fact that our God is Triune, three Persons, yet one God. Our first lesson seeks to address the problem of making God too small by returning to the mystery of creation. We should fully expect that many attributes of the God who created the universe by the power of his Word in six days will be incomprehensible to his creation. Note also the allusion to the triune nature of God already in the first five verses of Genesis.

Psalm 45 (Supplement page 32) (Brown Hymnal)

The New Testament Lesson: (Matthew 28:16-20) We know this section of Scripture as The Great Commission, for here Jesus himself spells out the purpose of our lives here on earth. Almost casually – as is so often the case in God's Word – reference is also made here to the Trinity. Proofs of the Triune nature of God fill the pages of our Bibles. A significant part of the Christian faith is learning to accept as true that which we can in no way prove or fully comprehend – simply because God's Word tells us it is so.

The Confession of Faith -

Part One of the Athanasian Creed – (See Bulletin Insert)

The Pre-Sermon Hymn – 245 (Verses 1-3, 6) (Red Hymnal)

"God Loved the World So that He Gave"

The Sermon – Text: Acts 2:14a, 22-36 (Printed on the back page of this bulletin)

"Stand In Awe of Your God"

The Offertory – (Supplement page 16 insert)

The Post-Sermon Hymn – 239 (Red Hymnal)

"Come, Thou Almighty King"

The Prayers

The Benediction

The Closing Hymn - 244 (Verses 1-2) (Red Hymnal)

"Glory Be to God the Father"

Silent Prayer

Welcome! - We warmly welcome any visitors who might be with us this morning and invite you to join us every Sunday at this time. St. Paul is a congregation in fellowship with the Church of the Lutheran Confession (CLC) – a conservative Lutheran synod with churches and missions throughout the United States, as well as Canada, India, and Africa. We are glad you are here. Thank you for letting us share the Word of God with you. Please record your visit in our Guest Book, and come again!

Attendance – Sunday (28) Average (40)

This Week at St. Paul:

Today	-10:00 a.m.	– Worship Service
	-11:00 a.m.	– Fellowship Hour
Monday	-9:00 a.m.	– CLC Board Meetings in Eau Claire
Next Sunday	-10:00 a.m.	– Worship Service
	-11:00 a.m.	– Fellowship Hour
	-11:20 a.m.	– Church Council Meeting

CLC News – Professor John Ude is considering the call to St Luke's of Lemmon. Pastor Paul Tiefel is considering the calls to Redeemer of Bowdle and Zion of Ipswich. Bethel of Morris has called Pastor Chad Seybt. Pastor-elect Cory Drehle is scheduled to be ordained and installed as pastor of Berea of Sioux Falls next Sunday, June 14th.

Church Council Meeting – The Church Council is scheduled to meet during the fellowship hour next Sunday. One item on the agenda is a discussion of the resumption of Holy Communion in our worship services. Please convey any thoughts or concerns to a Council Member prior to the meeting. Private communion is always available upon request, at the location of your choice.

Confirmation – Since Pastor Roehl is schedule to attend CLC Board meetings in Eau Claire Monday through Thursday, there will be no Wednesday Confirmation class this week. Confirmation parents will be contacted by Pastor Roehl for a possible alternate date later in the week.

Daily Rest Meditations and Lutheran Spokesman – As was the case with subscription to the CLC publication "Daily Rest," subscriptions are now due for the Lutheran Spokesman. Please see the sign-up sheet on the mailbox table and indicate whether you want to cancel, renew, or take out a new subscription.