

Togetherness

Matthew 28:16-20

Introduction

People are social animals. We want to be **together**. But with quarantining, social distancing, and now riots, violence and vandalism we feel more **separated** than ever. Just look in the eyes of the people around you. You see fear and distrust, distrust of one another and fear of coming together, the one thing we want to do. The devil has been working overtime to tear us apart. Is there an answer to our fractured life? If so, what is it?

Togetherness of the Trinity

Today is **TRINITY SUNDAY**. I've heard other pastors bemoan the idea of preaching about the **TRINITY**. There's no adequate way to humanly explain it. Yet, these same fellows have no trouble celebrating **COMMUNION**, receiving the body and blood of Christ. That, too, is a mystery, yet because the **Bible** says it's so, we accept it. Why can't we do the same with the **Trinity**? We can accept and celebrate something, even if we don't understand it.

Relational Theology

In my last year at NORTHERN BAPTIST THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY, we took **Senior Integrative Seminar**. One of the projects we had to do there was write our personal theology. That doesn't mean we got to pick and choose what we wanted to believe, like a smorgasbord. We each found a model to use to interpret theology. One person chose to explain theology through the music of the church. I chose to interpret life through the lens of **relationships**. Relationships explain everything in life to me.

Relationship Trinity

The ultimate of relationships is the one of the **Father, Son and Holy Spirit**. They are so closely related, that they are three distinct **Persons**, yet only one **God**. You can't get any closer than that. The Eastern church has historically seen it in terms of a **dance**. We see the **Trinity** in action, first in **CREATION**. In the beginning, **God** created. God **spoke** everything into existence; John identifies **Jesus**, the **Son** as the **Logos**, or **WORD**. The **Spirit of God** hovered over the face of the waters. In ancient times, bodies of water were thought to harbor chaos and evil. The **Spirit** was bringing **order** to **chaos**.

Created for Togetherness

When God says, *"Let us make man in our image, after our likeness"*, He was talking about the image of the **Trinity**. His desire for us was to be able to share in the fellowship of the **Trinity**. AUGUSTINE says that when God talks about creating man "according to our image", it's the image of the Trinity. *This image is not equal to the Trinity, as the Son is to the Father, but approaching it, as is said, by a certain likeness; as in things distinct there can be closeness, not however in this case as of a spatial closeness but by imitation*. Created in this closeness, we can join in the fellowship, or **dance** of the **TRINITY**.

We're in This Together

(Read **John 17:20-21**). We've talked about this recently, but it bears repeating. In Jesus' **HIGH PRIESTLY PRAYER**, His desire is for us to be in the **Trinity** and be **one**. The natural result of all of us being created to join in the fellowship of the Trinity is to be "in this together."

Separated by Sin

Then, in **Genesis 3**, it all came crashing down. When Satan got Adam and Eve to stop trusting God and go their own way, sin destroyed everything. Because God is **holy**, our sin **separates** us from Him. And being separated from God, we are separated from **each other**. That's why the devil has such an easy time of tearing our society apart. **Togetherness** is just an illusion for fallen humanity. As things get worse, we see what Paul is talking about in **Romans 1:18-32**. Read that when you want to see how we have not stopped our downward spiral since the fall, as three times, he uses the phrase, *and God gave them over*.

Brought Together by Jesus

The Good News is that there is hope. That hope is in Jesus Christ. **CYRIL OF ALEXANDRIA** said, *Christ's act was a renewal of that primal gift and of the inbreathing bestowed on us, bringing us back to the form of initial holiness*. Christ took our **sins** upon Himself and gave us His **righteousness**. When the **Holy Spirit** comes upon us at **BAPTISM**, that puts us back into the dance of the **Trinity**. Now, that doesn't make us perfect; that won't happen this side of Jordan. And it's true that many of us don't realize we have that kind of relationship. But that's why we can lean on God and have peace in Christ, no matter what the world throws at us, or how the devil tries to tear us apart.

Disciples Together

How can we be together now? In the **Gospel** lesson, Jesus says to make disciples by baptizing them and teaching them. A disciple must first be **initiated** by the waters of **Baptism** and **instructed** as to how to follow Jesus. For that is what a disciple does, he or she **follows**. As we follow Jesus, we will find ourselves growing closer together as time goes by. If two people are working toward a common goal, they will become closer together as they approach their goal. Look at a triangle. As the two lines make their way from the base to the apex, they get closer together until they meet as one.

Means of Grace

Of course, that perfect togetherness won't take place until we leave this life. But until then, we have the **MEANS OF GRACE** to keep us on the path of togetherness. As we hear His **Word** and partake of His **Sacrament**, He forgives our sin, which divides and gives us His **Spirit** which unites. And we find true **TOGETHERNESS IN CHRIST**.

*May the peace of God,
Which passes all understanding,
Keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.*
