

Father, Son, and Holy Spirit

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Scripture: Matthew 3:13-17

¹³ Then Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan, to be baptized by him. ¹⁴ John would have prevented him, saying, "I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?" ¹⁵ But Jesus answered him, "Let it be so now; for it is proper for us in this way to fulfill all righteousness." Then he consented. ¹⁶ And when Jesus had been baptized, just as he came up from the water, suddenly the heavens were opened to him and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him. ¹⁷ And a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased."

God created us to learn, whether at times we want to or not. Meaning, sometimes we learn from others by watching their examples. Of course, children usually are most impressionable. We also learn new things throughout our lives. Change is something that happens around and with us as time passes. And no doubt we can be forces and teachers of new things and of change, around and within us.

I know we all recall times when we learned something new, whether it was how to paint, play an instrument, ride a bike, skateboard, play a sport, dance, sing, write a poem create some art, or among so many other things have learned how to cook, listen and communicate better, use a new piece of technology, or a new topic or subject. A library alone has enough new things for you to learn from that it would take many lifetimes if you tried to read, listen to, and watch all that was available.

During this pandemic, and since March of last year, and with more time at home with my family, we started a garden after receiving a gift of seeds and a starter gardening set. From planting seeds to enjoying the vegetables, it was a learning experience for us all, including how all the various animals near our home thought we were so kind to prepare a nice vegetable buffet for them.

I also took up painting, which since I have grown to have much greater appreciation for artists. I absolutely love painting. And though limited with time to paint, I know I'm going to enjoy this for many years to come, especially when I have more time one day.

Interestingly, when it comes to learning new things, it can happen when nothing seems to have changed. What I mean is, you could have known someone all your life, but until you talk more with someone, you may have wondered or said after learning something surprisingly new, "Why did I never know that about you?" And usually the response is something like, "Well, you never asked." To which I would say something like, "Well, I would think that's something you'd have thought of sharing with me before or by now."

I want to impress upon you how much you can learn, in just a matter of minutes, about those around you, including those you live with and who think you know pretty much everything about.

Think now about times when you've re-read a book and you find that you that you learned new things and wondered why didn't recall certain significant details, even though you've read it before. Of all the books you can read and reread and continue to have that experience of learning something new, it is the Bible that is powerfully more than any other book since we call it God's Word and the Living Word.

Among the various new discoveries and learnings I have experienced in life has been when I read the Bible and learned about our God being a triune God. Though the word "trinity" is not in the Bible, we know of the three persons of God: God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit as the Trinity. This of course is nothing new for most of us. But can you remember when first learning about our One and Triune God?

Today we not only read about our triune God, but through the account of Jesus' baptism, we the relationship of the Trinity. And as we read the Bible and about Christ's life, one of the things that moves me the most about how God teaches us is God teaching us with visual, life-applicable and tangible lessons that we can experience even now and today.

Now, stepping back a bit here before diving more deeply into God showing and teaching us more about God's self, let us say what may seem obvious. God is beyond full description or understanding. God is God. Meaning though we were created in the image of God. We know God is not a human. Jesus did become human. But before he did, Jesus existed without any human form or designation. So God is not male or female or anything else we can describe as human. God made God's self known to us in ways we could understand, comprehend, accept and most importantly know. It is because Jesus came to earth, becoming human, though fully God at the same time, that we know Jesus as the Son of God. And thus, we use the terms God the Father in light of Jesus calling God his Heavenly Father.

Interestingly, there is no God the Daughter. Some would ascribe God the Holy Spirit with characteristics of a woman, mother, or other female traits. Yet, throughout the Bible, both in the Old and New Testaments, we do read of God being like a mother, and like a mother hen (Luke 13:34) or mother eagle (Deuteronomy 32:11-12).

So as we use terms as humans to describe the Trinity, let us know and keep in mind that God is beyond our human thoughts and terms that try to put God in some nice package or box that we fully understand. At the same time, we cannot deny how God became one of us in order to save us.

Again, the word 'trinity' is not used in the Bible. That is the word used to describe what we read in the Bible, especially in today's Scripture reading. Jesus, God the Son, is baptized by John the Baptist. And as he is baptized, the Holy Spirit, God the Spirit, descends upon him like

a dove. Then a voice from heaven, God the Father, said, “This is my Son, the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased.”

Throughout Jesus’ life, he referred to God as Father repeatedly. This is not to say that is how we must or always refer to God. Again, God is not male or female or human. What we learn here is that though it’s said that though people in the past may have thought God was the wind, or fire, or other form, God works in and through so many other ways. And God is the wind or the fire or other things, but God is not those items.

However, we have learned that God does exist in the three identities or persons as was witnessed at Jesus’s baptism. From *Christian Theology in Plain Language*, I read, “Within his own mysterious being God is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The designations are just ways in which God is God. Within the Godhead there are three "persons" who are neither three Gods nor three parts of God, but coequally and coeternally God.” (*Christian Theology in Plain Language*, p. 143)

Though not fully comprehensible, we learn how God is our Heavenly Parent, God is Jesus Christ, and God is also the Holy Spirit. God is not only in heaven above, but also one who walked on earth as fully human as he was fully God as Christ. And God, as the Holy Spirit, also lives in us, believers and followers of Jesus Christ.

We can find strength and comfort knowing we are children of God. We know God has, is, and will always take care of us, no matter what we go through. We know Christ has saved us so that we would be able to walk with his love and courage as we share his love with everyone in every way possible. He showed us the love of God, how to live and love, and calls us to serve one another with his love. And Christ said that we would never be alone, even though ascended into heaven until a day and time unknown when he’d return again. God sent us the Holy Spirit so that we would never be alone, always have the power to live for God, and have within us the very Spirit of God that raised Jesus from the dead (Romans 8:11).

Though some find it hard at times to comprehend, by God’s Holy Spirit we have the power and presence of God within us, making us able for his good works. God the Spirit teaches us, as Christ said in the Gospel of John the 14th chapter, verses 26-27, “But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything, and remind you of all that I have said to you. Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid.”

In the Old Testament we are told of God as Spirit, from creation to the time before Jesus was born. It wasn’t until God the Son came to earth, was born as a boy, that the references of our triune God were used as God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit.

There are other verses in the Bible that speak to our triune God. Paul the Apostle's blessing in 2 Corinthians 13:14: “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.” And Jesus’ Great Commission in Matthew 28:19: “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.”

So on this Trinity Sunday, let us live with always remembering who it is we serve and why. May we go and make disciples as we love and worship our God: God our Heavenly Parent who loves us so much; God our Lord and Savior, the Son of God; and God our God present and living within us, God the Holy Spirit, our God who make us able for all things. Amen.