

“A Plan for You” – Pr Jim Sprengle – Trinity Sunday May 26, 2024

- I. **John 3:5-7** – ⁵Jesus answered, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. ⁶That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. ⁷Do not marvel that I said to you, ‘You must be born again.’”
- II. **Today we deal with one of the great mysteries of the faith – the Trinity.**
 - a. Back when I began attending church with Michele, I did not even know what the Trinity was.
 - i. Even though I had spent much of my youth learning about God, I guess the teachings just never got through.
 - ii. After going to a Lutheran church as an adult... I remember the pastor drawing a triangle on a chalkboard in an evening Bible study.
 - iii. He described the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit as three distinct Persons in one God... they are co-equal (or one is not greater than the other)... and they work together in perfect unity in one Godhead.
 1. For the first time, I discovered the Trinity...
 - iv. Yet, that was only a lesson in knowledge, because I couldn't use that information I learned in any meaningful way.
 1. I could describe God, which is a big first step in knowing the ways God chooses to work in our lives and the world around us to bring restoration and redemption.
 2. Sure, we should all be able to describe God, but the work of God in our lives is really the most important thing.
 - b. I probably say this every year, but if we could fully understand God, then we would be God.
 - i. The mystery of God is a sign that we are created beings, whom God loves, but we are sinful, and as St. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 13, “¹² For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known.” (1 Corinthians 13:12)
 - c. So, our goal for today is not to understand the mysterious nature of God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit – but rather, we want to focus on the work of God in the world and its people.
- III. **Nicodemus comes to Jesus to find out more about Him.**
 - a. Many of the Pharisees and Sadducees were trying to trap Jesus and get Him in trouble with the religious leaders, however, Nicodemus seems genuinely interested in what Jesus can tell him or do for him.
 - i. He offers Jesus a compliment that He must be from God, or He couldn't do the signs and miracles that many had seen.

- b. Jesus gets right down to business and says, “Truly, truly I say to you” – which means in today’s language, “Listen carefully, what I tell you is the absolute truth.” (vss 3, 5)
 - i. And then He says, “unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” (vs 3) – which means that by nature we are unable to come to God nor accept Him, but we must be born again, or born from above to receive true life.
 - ii. Then Jesus goes on to say, “unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.” (vss 5-6)
 - iii. Again, Jesus is telling Nicodemus... and us... that all people must be born from above... of water and the Spirit to enter the kingdom of God.
- c. You see, we are all born of the flesh – that means we all became human through conception and birth into this world.
 - i. Yet, we also know the story from the beginning... that Adam and Eve rebelled against God in the Garden of Eden – and through their first sin... they opened the door for sin and brokenness to be passed down through all generations.
 - 1. Even babies... yes, even sweet little babies have this sin sickness... and none of us... not even little babies can be saved without an outside intervention.
 - ii. In the flesh, we are broken and lost because of sin... so we need a new birth through faith... through baptism.
 - iii. Jesus is describing baptism to Nicodemus... and especially that the Holy Spirit brings us to a new birth – a birth from above – which means we have faith in Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior.
 - 1. Baptism is a means by which God works in the world to save His people – giving them a new birth.
 - 2. It’s no wonder we baptize in a certain way... and it’s using the Word of God itself... I baptize you “in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.” (Matthew 28:19)
 - a. With these simple words and just regular water, God places His Holy name on us.
 - b. He gives us new life and faith in Him... which means He washes away our sins – not only the bad things we do – but the sin sickness that is passed on from Adam and Eve.
- d. Did you notice the connection to Trinity Sunday?
 - i. I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit – which is our God – not only in name, but also in power.
 - ii. Again, God doesn’t just want you to know about Him... that’s great to understand how to talk about God... but God wants you to know Him.

1. The basis of our 3:10 Discipleship Group is Philippians 3:10 – but I will read a couple of verses leading up to 10... “⁸ Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For His sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ ⁹ and be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith—¹⁰ that I may know Him...” (Philippians 3:8-10)
2. To know Jesus is to know God – and the work He has done to bring us salvation.

IV. **Our God has a plan... our God has always had a plan for you...**

- a. As the Father loves us, He would not let sin have the victory in our lives, so He made a definite plan of salvation that included the death of His Son... and the release of the Holy Spirit to bring all people to faith.
- b. It’s hard to imagine that God knew us before we were even conceived, but He did!
 - i. Speaking to the prophet Jeremiah, God said, “Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I [set you apart].” (Jeremiah 1:5)
 - ii. Paul says God, “set me apart before I was born.” (Galatians 1:15)
 - iii. And again Paul says that God, “chose us in [Jesus] before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before Him.” (Ephesians 1:4)
- c. All of this points to the love of God in Christ Jesus that came to us through baptism and the Word – in His plan of salvation for us all.
 - i. Christ, the Son of God died as the payment for our sins – so that all the burden that Adam and Eve passed on to us has no more power.
 - ii. Our sins... just like Sasha and her wonderful gift of baptism we experienced earlier... are washed away.
 - iii. That is the power of God the Father... the Son... and the Holy Spirit.
 - iv. That is God’s plan of salvation and grace that is meant for you.
- d. God has planned for your salvation from the beginning – and praise be to Him that the Holy Spirit has raised you from death to life through the Word and faith.
 - i. Yes, it may be difficult to understand the Trinity – the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit – but something far more important is that we know God for the work He does in our lives.
 - ii. We know that Jesus Christ is our Savior, the one given over to die, in order that we would not perish, but have eternal life (John 3:16)
 - iii. God’s plan is to save you... and by grace through faith (Ephesians 2:8-9)... His plan for you is fulfilled. Amen.