

First Presbyterian Church, Cheyenne, Wyoming, June 7, 2009  
Rev. Bob Garrard, Worship Theme: Trinity Sunday- The Power of the Trinity,  
Isaiah 6:1-8, Romans 8: 12-17, John 3: 1-17

When I began classes at Pittsburgh Theological Seminary in the fall of 1969, one of my goals was to have all my questions about the Bible, God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit answered. I learned a great deal in the classes I took, but after four years of seminary, I had many new questions for which I still seek answers. Fully understanding the Trinity, one God in three equal persons, as the Father, Son and Holy Spirit is one of them. The Trinity is one of those mysteries that can be pondered again and again.

Along with the mystery, there is a great deal of power expressed in the concept of the Trinity. Our ancestors in the faith used the power of their intellect and imaginations in trying to express the Trinity and its power in writing the **\*\*Apostles'** and Nicene Creeds—statements of belief we often declare in our worship services. During every Sunday service, we sing either the **\*\*Gloria Patri** or the Doxology or both in the service to praise the Trinity. There is a great deal of power to be felt as the words are sung. The Trinity is also outlined in the Prayer of Great Thanksgiving prayed in the communion litany. We often use the Trinitarian Benediction at the end of the service as a way of saying it is by this power we have just worshipped and now go out into the world. The scripture lessons for today give us insights on the power of the Trinity, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Of course, I will only touch on a few of these for the list of insights is as long as the Trinity is mysterious. **\*\* Items can be found at the end of the sermon.**

One of the ways in which we experience the power of the Trinity begins with God the Father or Creator as he makes the first move toward us to call us to worship him and serve him with our lives. Isaiah 6 is a perfect example of God's power at work to get our attention, to praise him, to confess our sinfulness to him, to be cleansed of our sin by him, and to move us to become one of his servants who proclaim his message.

To better understand Isaiah 6, allow me to set the scene by walking to the back of the sanctuary so that I can better direct your attention to the **\*\*front of the sanctuary.**

"The setting for God's power exhibited in Isaiah's call is most likely the Temple in Jerusalem. From the description of the setting, it appears that Isaiah is looking through the entranceway into the inner sanctum or chancel area of the temple." At this point, Isaiah has a vision of God in the temple. In our imaginations, let us join Isaiah in the vision. The temple becomes the throne room for God. God is high and lifted up on a throne and the train of God's robe fills the whole room. What a beginning to a vision! Isaiah sees himself in the presence of God. He does not see God's face for that is forbidden, but he knows God fills that temple with his robe and presence.

As we are looking forward, continue to use your imagination to picture with me the presence of God filling this sanctuary. **\*\*See God's powerful presence as we look into the colors of the stained glass windows. Dr. Jim Harper says they become 3-D after staring at them for a while. Gain a sense of how big God's presence is from the vastness of the sanctuary. Sense the unlimited power of God as we imagine the endless universe outside this room. \*\* See picture in files attached with sermon.**

Along with the powerful presence of God, Isaiah also sees "seraphs," God's servants or attendants surrounding God. They are serpent-like creatures with three pairs of wings and human hands and feet. They flutter nearby and they sing. Look at

the upper stained glass windows in our sanctuary in the front and sides. \*\*There are angels lofted in those windows who remind us of the servant seraphs. The angels also serve God and watch over us.

All the seraphs, as a group, are called seraphim. In Isaiah's vision, they are singing a song of praise to God. Let us today be that powerful voice of the seraphim by singing together with all our hearts the first verse of "Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty." Let us shake the walls of the sanctuary with our voices united in praise. "Holy, holy, holy! Lord God Almighty! Early in the morning our song shall rise to Thee; Holy, holy, holy! merciful and mighty! God in three Persons, blessed Trinity!" (go forward)

In Isaiah's vision, the voices of the seraphim praising God and the smoke of the incense combine making the prophet feel the temple or whole earth shake and tremble. So it's no wonder the prophet begins to shake and tremble as well! Also, the prophet suddenly has an intense fear that he is a sinner in a sinful land, and not worthy to be in the presence of God. This might well spell his doom! Then Isaiah hears God's voice asking whom can God send to the sinful people of Israel. Without hesitation, Isaiah says, like so many before and after him, "Here I am; send me." Then a seraph takes a pair of tongs and lifts a burning coal from the altar and touches it to Isaiah's mouth to purify him so that he is made right with God and can speak God's message to Israel. All of this becomes a powerful experience of God for Isaiah. From these verses we take the idea of our prayer of confession and assurance of pardon we use during worship. When we worship here, the power of God the Father or Creator is also just as present if we but listen and look for it. Emphasis, May/June , 03

In the Gospel of John, we also find the power of the Trinity and God the Father making the first move toward us in the "only begotten Son, Jesus, the second person in the Trinity. A seminary classmate of mine, Donald K. McKim, writes that "in John 3: 16 Jesus told Nicodemus: 'For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.' This clearly shows God's power and initiative in providing for human salvation. God sent the Son into the world 'in order that the world might be saved through him' (John 3:17). This means that salvation originates with God who wills to overcome the separation between God and humanity that has resulted because of human sin," the same human sin Isaiah was called to condemn in 735 B.C. "In salvation, God wills to reconcile, redeem, liberate, and establish peace with those whose sin has alienated them from the loving, trusting relationship that God intends to have with humans. Salvation would not be possible if God had not 'made the first move' and out of divine love and power sent the Son to be the Savior of the world.

Since Jesus is God with us, he is also God coming to us, and calling us to believe in the Son. "The Son freely gave himself to be the one through whom humanity's relationship with God can be restored. The focus of the Son's saving activity is the cross. This is the meaning of Jesus' comment to Nicodemus: 'Just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life' (v. 15). Salvation comes by faith, which is 'believing' in the person of the One who died on the cross as the divinely-established sacrifice for sin, and as the One through whom 'eternal life' is given as God's free gift.

The many biblical, and later theological images and expressions for the meaning of the cross, show the inexhaustible depth of significance that the work of Christ has for salvation.” Jesus the son, the second person in the Trinity was God coming to us, calling us to believe and giving his life, his flesh, his blood, and his Spirit to unite and reunite us as his body or family. \*\*He is the victorious lamb pictured in our main stained glass window. Oh, what power there is in the Son, the second person of the Trinity who gave his life to reunite us with the first person in the Trinity, God the Father or Creator. Let us hear and respond wisely to God’s call for us to believe in the Son.

The third person in the Trinity is the Holy Spirit—and what power there is in the Spirit! Don McKim says that “Jesus’ discussion with Nicodemus indicated that eternal life comes through believing in God’s Son. But this salvation, new way of living, or entrance into God’s reign must be personally appropriated,” or experienced. “This is what Jesus was pointing toward when he said, ‘No one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above’ (v. 3). No one can enter the kingdom ‘without being born of water and Spirit’ (v. 5). This led to the well-known word play of the Greek term *pneuma*, which can mean both ‘wind’ and ‘spirit.’ Jesus said, ‘The *pneuma* [wind or spirit] blows where it chooses’ (v. 8). Just as the wind blows, so the spirit of God blows and bestows the birth ‘from above’ which is ‘eternal life’ or the entrance into ‘God’s kingdom’ upon whomever God chooses. It is through the Spirit that the gift of salvation centered in Jesus Christ and his death on the cross is received. The Spirit is the energizing power that brings the reality of salvation to those who believe in Jesus by faith”. “LECTIONARY HOMILETICS” IS THE SOURCE OF DONALD K. MCKIM’S QUOTES.

As Roger read in Romans, it is the Spirit that leads us from a life in the flesh where we die and decay to a life as an adopted child of God where we can call God “Abba or Daddy” just as Jesus did. To be made a child of God by the power of the Spirit means we too will inherit everlasting life just as Jesus has. It means that as we walk this earth we can know that the very God who fills this sanctuary cleanses us of sin, calls us to serve him and is with us wherever we may go. It means that when we die, God will raise us from the dead to be with him, with the Son and the Spirit forever. It is by the power of the third person in the Trinity, the Spirit, that God first comes to us, and calls us to believe in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior and become an adopted child of God. Today, we will also experience the power of the Trinity as God calls us to his table: To remember the Son who gave his body and shed his blood on the cross for the forgiveness of our sins, and who made a new covenant with us represented by the cup where he promised to be with us forever: And, to be led by the power of the Spirit to experience the presence of the Son as we eat this supper of the Eucharist or thanksgiving. When we celebrate communion we are somewhat like the Trinity, we are at the same time separate individuals who act as one body for God. It is only by the power of the one God in three persons, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit we can envision and experience what this table of God really means.

I have another 75 pages of insights on the Trinity to share with you today, but it is time for me to be quiet, get out of the way, and let the Trinity, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit speak to you itself.

## THE APOSTLES' CREED

I BELIEVE in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth,  
And in Jesus Christ his only Son our Lord; who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried; he descended into hell; the third day he rose again from the dead; he ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead. I believe in the Holy Ghost; the holy catholic Church; the communion of saints; the forgiveness of sins; the resurrection of the body; and the life everlasting. Amen.

## THE NICENE CREED

WE BELIEVE in one God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible;  
And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all worlds, God of God, Light of Light, Very God of Very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father by whom all things were made; who for us men, and for our salvation, came down from heaven, and was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the Virgin Mary, and was made man, and was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate. He suffered and was buried, and the third day he rose again according to the Scriptures, and ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of the Father. And he shall come again with glory to judge both the quick and the dead, whose kingdom shall have no end.  
And we believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and Giver of Life, who proceedeth from the Father and the Son, who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified, who spoke by the prophets. And we believe one holy catholic and apostolic Church. We acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins. And we look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.

## Gloria Patri

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost;  
As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, world without end.  
Amen, Amen.

## Doxology

Praise God, from whom all blessings flow; Praise \*Him, all creatures here below;  
Praise \*Him above, ye heavenly host; Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Amen.