

Wednesday in Invocavit, 2006
Text: Matthew 3:13-17
Trinity Lutheran, Worden, IL & Zion Lutheran, Carpenter, IL
Pastor H. R. Curtis

✠Grace, Mercy, and Peace to you from God our Father, and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ ✠

In the Name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

In Church we read the lessons. We sing the hymns. We pray the Our Father. And we confess the Creed. To confess means to "say the same thing." Thus when we say the Creed we are confessing what God has given us to say – saying the same thing back to him. The Creeds of the Church are just collections of Scriptural verses put in a logical order – in this way they are miniature Bibles, easy to memorize so that you can always carry it with you. God reveals himself to us in his Word and we say back to him what he has said to us: we confess what he has given us to confess. We have nothing else to say besides what he has said to us.

Thus confessing the Creed is an act of faith – in fact, the word Creed is just a form of the Latin word "I believe." In the Creed we lean not on our own understanding, but simply on the Word of the Lord. The Creed is not some manmade philosophy or mysticism about the Higher Power. The Creed is not the invention or the guesswork of the best minds in humanity: it is the distilled Word of God, the very Doctrine of God given by God himself.

Thus the Creed draws a line and says: If you believe this, you know the true God. If you do not believe this, then you do not know the true God. Thus the Nicene Creed which we confess at every celebration of the Lord's Supper, is the foundational and definitive statement of Christianity. Even though Muslims and Jews claim to worship the one God, even though Mormons and Jehovah's Witnesses claim to follow the Bible – these people do not know the true God and in reality worship gods of their own (or the devil's) invention. For they do not know the God confessed in the Nicene Creed – Father, Son and Holy Ghost – and there is no god beside him.

The Creed confesses that God is a mysterious being beyond what we can understand. He is a Trinity – a tri-unity – three-yet-one. He is one being. There is only one God. Yet the Father is God and the Son is God and the Holy Ghost is God. And yet there are not three gods but only one God. And yet the Father is not

the Son and the Son is not the Spirit. And yet these three who are not the same are yet only one God.

This chief mystery of the Christian faith – the Mystery of the Holy Trinity – is seen revealed throughout the Scriptures. In creation we get a hint of the depth of God's being when he says, "Let us make...." not "Let me make...." We see throughout the Old Testament strange appearances of a messenger of the Lord – in the burning bush, to the armies of Israel, to Abraham – who says he is the Lord. Finally in the New Testament this mystery takes a clearer form: in our Gospel lesson we see the Father speak from heaven while the Son stands in the waters of the Jordan now incarnate, now made man, while the Holy Spirit is visible like a dove resting on him. Father, Son, and Holy Ghost – three persons, one being. The mystery of the only true God.

But why is all this important? Is this just a scholastic theory of how God works that has not real bearing on my life? Something to be learned in confirmation class and then forgotten along with Algebra and Geography? Not at all. The doctrine of the Blessed Trinity is the bedrock of our faith and our only salvation. For recall what we confessed in the explanation of the Creed from the Small Catechism this evening. The whole Trinity is bent on your salvation. God the Father creates the world through his Son and Spirit and gives you all the blessings of this body and life: your body, possessions, health, income and so forth. He does this only out of fatherly divine goodness and mercy. Just because he loves you.

Then the Father sends his eternal son, begotten of the Father from eternity, into the flesh to also become Man, born of the virgin Mary. He came to die for you, to save you from sin and the kingdom of Satan. For as we saw last week in dealing with the 10 Commandments, you are in need of a Savior. As we confess in the third article of the Creed, you cannot by your own reason or strength come to God or even believe in him. The Holy Spirit must lead you to this for by nature we are unclean, broken, sinners. No one can escape this. Sin is in the world and in us.

But there is yet reason to rejoice for the Lord Jesus has purchased us and redeemed us from sin not with gold or silver, but with his precious blood and innocent sufferings and death. And the Holy Spirit has called us out of darkness with his gifts – which are give out here in the one, holy, universal, Christian, and apostolic Church. For as the Spirit descended on Jesus at his Baptism when he took up the sins of the world, so at your Baptism in the name of the Trinity – Father,

Son and Holy Spirit – you received Christ's righteousness and new birth through the Holy Spirit.

This is our saving God: the Holy Trinity. We believe in him for he has revealed to us his salvation. To believe in God means simply to trust him. That is what it means to have faith: to trust. Indeed, our Lord is worthy of our trust, for he is ever truthful and ever merciful. Thus, tonight trust his word of salvation for you when this same miraculous God says: take eat, this is my body; take drink, this cup is the new testament in my blood. For what this God says, goes. He says that his real body and blood are here for you to eat and drink for the forgiveness of your sins, for the renewing of your spiritual life. Trust that word and come forward to receive this greatest of blessings.

In the Name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

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Now the peace of God which passes all understanding will keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.

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