

Trinity, 2006
Text: Matthew 28:18-20
Trinity Lutheran, Worden, IL & Zion Lutheran, Carpenter, IL
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✠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.

We are here today to receive the gifts of God, indeed to receive Jesus himself in his Holy Sacrament. So before the Divine Service itself begins, we start off by confessing our sins. By admitting that we are by nature sinful and unclean, that we have sinned by our own most grievous fault by what we've done and left undone. That is, we confess that we have been Christians in name only.

It is good for you to do this, to examine your heart and admit to the hollowness you find there, to admit you've been a Christian in name only. For each time you speak cruel words to your family members, each time you grease the wheels of business with a little lying, each time you push your daydreams towards fantasies of revenge and pride you show that you do not fear, love, and trust in God above all things.

So it is good for you to come here each week and prepare to receive God's gifts with an act of repentance. You need to repent, to turn away from yourself and yours sins and back to Christ. Your whole life must be one of repentance for we exist on this side of heaven under hardships and temptations. A week will not pass in which you will not need to repent and turn back to the Lord. So do not be too proud to admit your weaknesses. The Church is the place for weak people who need support. Do not be too stubborn to heed the word of Christ: Repent.

And once you repent of being a Christian in name only, you will have reason to rejoice for you shall learn that you really are a Christian in Name only. That is, you are a Christian in THE Name only. To repent, to turn away from yourself means to admit that there is no hope in yourself for salvation, no hope of mustering up the strength within yourself to please God. It means giving up basing your name "Christian" upon yourself and your works and your piety. If your Christianity is based on your abilities and accomplishments then you shall always be a Christian in name only. But give up on all this and you will find that your status as a Christian is based in THE Name only.

That is, you are a Christian by virtue of God's Name – and that is the only reason you are a Christian. You are a Christian in The Name only, the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. This is the Name into which you were

baptized – that is how God took a hold of you, how God made you his. That is why we celebrate and praise the Holy Name of the Trinity. For in the mystery of God's being as Trinity we find our salvation.

For note well what Jesus says, he says we are to be baptized into THE Name – one Name, one God – and yet that one Name is of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Three persons, one Name. Three persons, one being. The Father is Lord, the Son is Lord, the Holy Spirit is Lord. And yet they are not three Lords, but one Lord. They all have the one Name.

This mystery of the Holy Trinity is the basis for our salvation for this is how God is Love. The false god of the Moslems or of the philosophers like Plato cannot be Love because the false god of Mohammed and Plato are radically one, totally alone, and in such radical solitude there can be no love. But in the true God's oneness there is also threeness. And in this community of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit there is thus love – indeed, the Spirit is even called the bond of Love between Father and Son. And what is most wonderful is that this Love between the persons of the Trinity overflows the bounds of the Trinity and spills into your life.

It is this great love of the Trinity that caused the Father to have pity on us poor sinners and send the eternal and only-begotten Son into the womb of the Virgin by the power of the Holy Spirit. And this God-man, our Lord Jesus Christ, loved you to the ends of love with the overflowing Love of the Trinity; and it took him to a cross. And there, mystery of mysteries, the love of the Trinity was shown in the rejection of the Son by the Father; the Son became sin for you, suffered your punishment, received the Father's wrath on your behalf and died. But the Love of the Trinity could not be contained by that Johnny-come-lately Death – not a chance: the Son rose from the dead and was thus declared to be the Son of the Father by the power of the Spirit. And so did the Trinity burst our bonds of death and the grave. So now the Son's resurrection proves that you too shall rise, for you have been baptized into that strong Name of the Trinity which has destroyed death.

And now you live in the power of the Name as well. And only in the power of that Name. Do not try to live from your own strength; do not try to go it alone on your own steam. For aren't we, who are said to be the victorious sons and daughters of God, weak, and faltering? Don't we still exist in the flesh amid so much temptation?

Yes. It is so. You are both: by the never-failing power of the Name of the Trinity you are God's saint: forgiven, victorious, free. But you are also still in the flesh: you are weak, you will be tempted, you will fall. But to this add Jesus' promise: I am with you always to the very end of the age. And how we need him with us, for our Lord has not promised you an easy walk on this earthly journey. He has promised that it will be just the opposite. You will have heart-ache and hardship. Loved ones will be ripped away from you too soon. Your body and the

bodies of those you love will be wrecked by disease and injury. You will suffer the effects of this sinful, fallen world. It will be unfair and unkind and it will last until you die.

So do not neglect the promises of the Lord – but cling to them. Call on the Lord's promise to be with you always in Baptism, Absolution, and the Supper. For in these Holy Sacraments the Lord is with you always to forgive you, to sustain you, to keep you faithful. Apart from these promises of the Lord, his means of grace, you will fall. So come, receive the Lord's gifts and he will sustain you until he finally takes us from this valley of sorrow to be with himself in heaven where there shall finally be no more weeping and sorrow but only joy in sharing the Life of the Blessed Trinity. Amen.

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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