

5 Reasons the Trinity Matters

Matthew 28:19-20

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We have just completed THINK 09 and have been filled with the reality of the trinity. If you could not attend the CD's are available on line. Dr Bruce Ware stimulated us regarding the glory of the triune God as the Father, Son and Holy Spirit relate to each other. There were several practical applications given as to the relevance of the trinity to our lives. Today, I want to continue that theme and bring home the application of the study of God in his triune being to College Park. This sermon is more topical and applicational in bringing home the reality of the trinity.

In introduction there are a couple of review items I would like to share. First, a working definition of trinity is "There is ONE God in THREE persons". That has been challenging through the years but sums up the beauty of a totally unified God and yet the diversity of persons that make up God. There is certainly Biblical proof for this. A couple of New Testament passages help us to start to see this. I have encouraged people to remember some of the trinity verses by looking at the beginning and ends of some of the NT books. In John 1:1, Ephesians 1:3-14, and I Peter 1:2, we see clear statement of the trinity. At the end of Matthew (28:19) and 2 Corinthians (13:14), we again see the truth stated very clearly. Remembering the beginning and end has helped me to recall the verses.

There are 3 words that are helpful in reviewing the difficult concept of the trinity. These words help to make the concept move closer to reality. God lives in a RELATIONSHIP of UNITY, while experiencing the beauty of DIVERSITY. What a wonderful concept. God is not some 2 dimensional blob of infinite force. He is personal and that is shown in the interrelatedness of the Godhead. The 4th word to describe this relational God is LOVE. He is love (I John 4:6). That is a term of relationship and would be an absurd description of God if there were not the Father to love the Son to love the Spirit and so on. Those who deny the trinity also deny the personality of God and his relational reality that is summed up in the word "love".

Our job this morning is to review some Scripture and see how we, as image bearers of the triune God, can "flesh" out the glory of that triune God in our relationships. There is much to see and learn so let's get started.

Reason #1: God's relationship to us (I Cor. 8:4-6)

⁴Therefore, as to the eating of food offered to idols, we know that "an idol has no real existence," and that "there is no God but one." ⁵For although there may be so-called gods in

heaven or on earth—as indeed there are many "gods" and many "lords"—⁶yet for us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist.

These verses are very intriguing and helpful. They appear in a context of disunity in the church of Corinth. There were differences of opinions concerning whether to eat meat offered to idols or not. Paul comes out of the blocks and asserts the idols are merely figments of man's imagination. There is only ONE God. This was exactly what Judaism thought--Monotheism at its best. Then Paul makes a shocking amplification. He asserts in verse 6 that there is one God the Father from whom are all things and for whom we exist. That would not have surprised any of the readers.

The next statement would have been very distinctive and alarming to some of the Jewish readers. Paul then, without flinching says virtually the same thing about the Son. The overall verse says there is ONE God who is Father and Son and he has the right to rule since he created everything and sustains everything. What a great statement. There is ONE God who has at least 2 persons to his reality (the Spirit will come out later in the letter). In chapter 10 Paul builds off of that statement and says in vs 7 "*Do not be idolaters*". We are to have no other God except this one God who is gloriously revealed as a personal, relational God, the Father and Son.

So, how does that effect CPC? Part of Trinitarian thought is that God is one. Here are some very real implications for us to consider today in the 21st century.

CPC, we have ONE supreme God. We need to worship HIM only. The terms of relationship with God are clear—He is God and we are not. It is our privilege to worship him and him alone

CPC, we are also called to have NO other gods before Him. He (Father, Son and Spirit) is to be supreme and we are told that to have a relationship with him, all other idols need to be smashed and removed. Our current difficult times may crush some of our idols in spite of our desire to keep them. We have many idols such as wealth, health, reputation, family, ease of life and others. God wants his people to bow our knee to HIM only. That is seeing the world through Trinitarian lenses—we will have NO other gods.

Paul continues this argument in I Corinthians into the 10th chapter and the 31st verse. Here he says "*whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do ALL to the glory of God*". He is supreme and demands glory always. What does that look like you may (or should ask). Let me give you a little idea of it and encourage you to work hard to flesh out what is should look like in your life. When you eat (that is probably a regular occurrence), you should do it to the glory of God. That would include thanks for the food that comes from God. It would also be to appreciate the taste, the creative cook, the wonderful way that body digests food and brings it together to sustain us, etc. The triune God is what brings together all the diversity of life. We worship him when we eat or drink. I love Mt Dew and its sweet taste brings my mind to the sweet reality of the triune God (really it happens only sometimes and should happen at all times). My favorite

meal is an excellent steak and maybe a Mt. Dew (or Coke) and a good vegetable and a bit of excellent chocolate to complete it.

Paul does not say simply eating and drinking (remember it is in the context of meat offered to idols and in chapter 11 he talks about the Lord's Table), he then goes the limit and says— "whatever you do". That covers it all. That includes our quiet times, church services, witnessing and our ski trips, golf outings, romantic interludes, work around the house, interactions with our family and friends, our "down" times and everything. It all is to reflect the glory of the triune God . He centers all the diversity of life and it is all to be done to his glory.

So CPC, let us get our Trinitarian lenses in place and look at ALL of life and bring it to center on the glory of the ONE God who will not share his glory with anyone or anything.

Reason #2: Family relationships (Genesis 1:26-27)

"Then God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth. So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he created him, male and female he created them."

What a wonderful text telling us who we are. The first chapters of Genesis are crucial for life on this planet as humans. We learn from whom we came—we are created by God and what we were created for—to bear his image in this world. As you look at this text the Hebrew parallel thought is expressed in a crescendo fashion. God created man in his image is the first line. It is then repeated in reverse order, finally it is amplified, as the diversity of the image of God is manifested--having both male and female. What a beautiful idea.

If I were God (thank God I am not), I might have reduced the moving parts and made one kind of human. He did not. He created humans with diversity at our core nature and called on the diverse humans to bear his image. How do we bear his image? I believe it is partly and mostly by living in loving relationships like the triune God lives in loving relationship. We are to love God and love our neighbor. Our oneness as humans who are diverse is to reflect the glory of the oneness of God in 3 persons, blessed trinity. Sin hinders that unity and falls short of the glory of God. We can see the potential of God's glory in our families and unfortunately we can also see the horror of sin destroying the unity and emphasizing our selfish persons.

So how do the Trinitarian lenses help us in our family lives?

In our marriages and our sense of gender and sexuality the trinity makes all the difference in the world. I occasionally do weddings and say much of the same thing every time. I see this beautiful woman coming down the aisle and this well dressed man waiting up in the front and they are joined hand to hand and everyone gasps. They look better than they ever looked and

ever will look. I, as the pastor, remind them that they are created beings by God who loves the diversity that comes from men and women. I am glad the world is not all men—what a boring world that would be. I then encourage them to walk out of here as one, while recognizing their differences and to live a life of unity so the world will know they are male and female, but will still say—they are one.

Why does sex sell? It is because Satan knew very early on that to destroy God's kingdom he needed to get at the image bearer. The diversity of the image bearer is clearly stated in our sexuality and Satan has vigorously attacked that aspect to destroy our desire to be one. Most of our counseling cases come from those of us who struggle with sexual issues. Our real struggle is that we do not live to glorify the triune God. We live our married lives and understand our sexuality as our independent right. We do not see it as reflective of the love of Father, Son and Spirit, but we demand our autonomy. Satan has not reduced his battle and it seems to continue to work.

May we be a church that views our marriages, and sexuality with Trinitarian lenses and repent when we become selfish and destroy the unity God intends for his people. Affirm today that your family relationships will be lived to His glory and will not be for your selfish desires.

We have many children in our church. They are the next generation. They range anywhere from newborns to adults. We should view them in light of our view of the triune God. In Genesis, God commands his image bearers to multiply and replenish the earth. That means have kids. I love to write on the cards we send to new parents "congratulations on a new image bearer." That is not real "gooey" but it is right. Each little child is a full-fledged image bearer and we are duty bound and privileged to lead them to lives of living out the reality of the triune God.

Trinity may be a hard concept for a young one, but the idea of a unified family is not hard. To stop kids who think the family revolves around them is to teach Trinitarian theology to them. To abuse kids is to ignore the glory of a loving triune God. What a challenge it is to raise image bearers who are not the center of any universe and who also are secure in their relationships. Ultimately we want our kids to relate rightly to their creator and then to see that consistently lived in our families. We need several pairs of Trinitarian glasses for our whole family.

A short note to the teens of CPC: you are a wonderful part of the whole church. You are part of the body. Appreciate your part in your family at home and here at church. We are in this thing together. We love you and want you to love one another. You have great pastors that are leading you, take advantage of it and you have good parents. Take your teen version of Trinitarian lenses and enjoy your stage of life and work to live in unity under God in the context of your family and church. God will bless you all.

Singles often think they are left out in the family discussions of the church. You are not left out in Trinitarian discussions. We are all together a part of the real core family of God. There are some unique areas where you reflect the glory and relationship with the triune God. Paul speaks to this in I Corinthians 7. You have the opportunity to live in relationship with God unrestrained by family.

Many of you will say, but I still want a family. That is an appropriate desire, but as God has you where you are, live out his image by developing an intense relationship with him and look for areas to develop relationships within the church. Adopt a family; be involved in acts of love. Let God be you spouse to whom your love is specifically directed.

CPC let's get our Trinitarian lenses in place and establish families that appreciate diversity and are unquestionably reflecting the unity of the glorious triune God.

Reason #3—The church is people in relationships (I Corinthians 12:12-13)

“For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and were all made to drink of one Spirit.”

This passage sounds very Trinitarian. Paul mixes the words “many” and “one” often so they seem to be similar. There are many members and one body (Trinitarian lenses think—like 3 persons 1 God). The One Spirit unites us altogether while appreciating our diversity—Jews and Greeks, slaves and free. What a wonderful text to describe the church. So—How do the Trinitarian lenses help us to view our place in the church?

Think of our corporate worship. Mark and Eric are our God-given leaders in corporate worship. All of life is worship, but there is a distinct glory of corporate worship where we come together with a huge amount of diversity, and worship the ONE God in 3 persons, blessed trinity. Here is a phrase I love—**“In corporate worship, there must be unity in the object of our worship (GOD), while there is diversity in the exercises of worship.”** Notice our pre-message worship. Occasionally the choir leads us in worship. Last week was a great example of diversity coming together in unity. Many singers and orchestra and band and keyboards with a unified voice saying not to us BUT to you God belongs the glory.

We live Trinitarian worship as representatives of the diversity of humanity joined in one voice to worship the God who centers our lives in HIM. At the same time, behind the scenes there were people doing a bunch of things, ushers, sound people, nursery workers, youth workers, maintenance helpers, First hand greeters, just regular people connecting and much more. All together in a short time, and in many ways, we worshipped the triune God. We were brought together in ONE under the banner of God the Father, Son and Spirit.

On a normal Sunday corporate worship service, our lead pastor, Mark, leads us in the listening to the Word of our God. The Bible is unbelievable as the triune God gave his Word to us with a diversity of styles and writers and it is all the Word of God. Mark does an excellent job with Colossians, Job, Matthew and even with topics to be the person standing representing God to us as God's spokesperson.

Gifts in ministry are easy to see here. I have never been in an assembly where there were so many gifts in the form of people. We have people working with the people with handicaps; we have people working maintenance; we have writers, readers, players, prayers, teachers, helpers, etc. You are all over the place.

We have African/Americans, we have Asians, we have Latinos, we even have Europeans and whatever else you think you are. All together this screams the diversity that the triune God created working in unity to the glory of that same God.

We have specific ministry areas that are diverse but are all on a mission to ignite a passion to follow Jesus who will lead us to the triune God. Don with Next Generation ministries and compassion, Doug with personal discipleship, Mary Beth with women's ministries, Dale with local outreach and assimilation (that sounds Trinitarian). Joe R. with administration that helps to harmonize us together, Nate will be on the next slide. When you walk the crowded halls of CPC, please praise the triune God for the masses of people who are very diverse and unified in worshipping our great God.

CPC let's get our Trinitarian lenses in place and support a community of believers that appreciate diversity and are unquestionably reflecting the unity of the glorious triune God

Reason #4: How do we relate to the world (Matthew 28:19-20)

"Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

Most of us are familiar with these verses. They are called the great commission. I think it could also be called the mission of God and we are commissioned to share in his mission. His mission is to draw people into a relationship with him as a relational God (Father, Son, and Spirit). The world is called to come to God and the invitation is to share in the community of the Godhead—be baptized in the name of the Father, Son and Spirit. That is just like a triune God. He would invite others into his fellowship.

So let's put on our glasses and look at the world.

The Father, Son and Spirit desire to have fellowship with humanity. God has called on his people to be ambassadors for HIM and do the work of calling the world to be reconciled with God. What a sobering and great mission

Our mission is to represent the triune God and make disciples of all nations, ushering them into the reality of the Godhead. Here at CPC we have 9 strategic partnerships where we are trying to live out that commission. We are showing the nations that God wants fellowship with them in Nicaragua, India, East Asia, Cambodia, Ukraine, Kenya, Hungary, the Caspian area, Brazil and Liberia. What a great invitation.

We need to be active at home, to our neighbors and city and country. We need to be active at Brookside and everywhere else the world (with all its diversity) needs the unity of the triune God that only comes in Jesus.

CPC, let's get our Trinitarian glasses on and be on the mission to call people to the fellowship of the triune God.

Reason #5: Relationships with the Triune God are only through Jesus (John 14:6)

"I am the way and the truth and the life, no one comes to the Father except through me."

This verse causes some to get angry because it is so exclusive. Only one way to the Father—that is so narrow. The way is narrow, but the end is glorious. Jesus saves us to bring us to the Father not primarily to free us from hell. We are ushered into a relationship with the triune Godhead because of the finished work of Jesus on the cross. His life gives us the entrée to the Godhead. The question is, "Have you in faith trusted in Jesus to bring you to fellowship with God?"

Recently I had a couple of occasions to go to an excellent restaurant on the top of one of Indy's tallest buildings. I have 2 friends that invited me to join them there. We went up the elevator and came to this wonderful restaurant with a stunning view and exquisite food. As we came to the person to seat us, he knew the names of both of my friends and ushered them to our seats. They did not know me and it did not matter, because I was with people that they did know. If I had tried to gain access without them, I would have been denied. While I was with them, I was free to eat some great food, enjoy an excellent view and share in some Trinitarian fellowship.

So it is for us. All we have relationally with God is through his Son. Jesus ushers us to the Godhead. Today we will partake of the Lord's Supper. He is our entrée to the Godhead. If you do not know Him—please trust Jesus today. "Whoever will call on the name of the Lord will be saved".

So CPC, put on your Trinitarian lenses and enjoy the glory of coming into the presence of the Godhead today because of Jesus and let's repent of our sin which falls short of God's glory and let us reaffirm our commitment to live for the glory of our triune God because Jesus paid it all.

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