

The Trinity: United in His Work

Holy Trinity Sun. – 06/04/23 – Mt. Calvary Luth.

Text: Acts 2:14a, 22-36 Pastor Keith Besel

vv. 32-33, [Peter proclaims to the Jews,] **“This Jesus God raised up, and of that we all are witnesses. Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He (Jesus) has poured out this that you yourselves are seeing and hearing.”**

Introduction

✘ When we Christians typically talk about the Holy Trinity, we usually emphasize the distinctive roles of the three persons that comprise the one true God.

→ We think of the Father in connection with our Old Testament Reading today, primarily in terms of His work of creating and sustaining the world. It is after all what we confess in the Small Catechism when we say, “I believe that God has made me and all creatures. He has given me my body and soul, eyes, ears, and all my limbs, my reason, and all my senses, and still preserves them.” That’s good, solid, biblical theology.

→ And we think of the Son primarily in terms of His work in saving us from our sins and restoring us to a proper relationship with the Father. Again, with the Small Catechism we confess, “I believe that Jesus Christ, true God, begotten of the Father from eternity, and also true man, born of the Virgin Mary, is my Lord. He has redeemed me, a lost and condemned creature, purchased and won me from all sins, from death, and from the power of the devil.”

→ Then we generally think of the Holy Spirit in terms of His work of bringing us to faith through the Word and the Sacraments, and strengthening and keeping us in that faith. The Small Catechism leads us to confess, “I believe that I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to Him. But the Holy Spirit has called me by the Gospel, enlightened me with His gifts, sanctified and kept me in the true faith.”

✘ Of course, there’s nothing wrong with thinking of the three distinct persons in the Holy Trinity in this way; it’s both biblical and true. However, when we look closely at the way that the Bible talks about the three persons of the Trinity, it’s interesting to see how it speaks of what the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit do together as the one true God.

→ On the day of Pentecost, this is the perspective Peter has in mind in his sermon to the crowd that gathered to see what was going on when God poured out the Holy Spirit on Jesus’ followers that day.

→ You see, it’s a bit of surprise, if we take a close look at Peter’s Pentecost sermon that it’s not really about the Holy Spirit. It’s about Jesus! And that’s what makes it a most appropriate text for us today on Holy Trinity Sunday, because in preaching about Jesus, Peter shows us how the One true God: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, work together to bring about our salvation.

I. God raised Jesus

✘ Our text begins with Peter emphasizing the absolutely foundational fact that God raised Jesus up from the dead (v.24). It’s interesting that Peter doesn’t seem to even be concerned with trying to argue for the resurrection of Jesus.

→ He simply states it as a fact that everyone, including the people of Israel in front of him, should already know. He points them to the countless “mighty works and wonders and signs

that God did through [Jesus]" as he says, "in your midst, as you yourselves know..." (v.22). And he doesn't shy away from putting their obvious guilt right in front of their eyes either, saying, "this Jesus...you crucified and killed" (v.23).

→ Yet his main point comes next in verse 24, "God raised Him up, loosing the pangs of death, because it was not possible for Him to be held by it". And later in verse 32 Peter emphasizes, "of that we all are witnesses". You see, Peter expects those before him to acknowledge and accept Jesus' resurrection as a fact that is beyond question and dispute.

✘ This is because Peter does not want to get bogged down debating whether or not Jesus actually did rise, but instead his intent is to explain the *significance* of Christ's resurrection.

→ So to do this Peter takes these people of God, who readily acknowledge the authority of God's Word, which for them at that time was what we know of as the Old Testament; He takes them to Psalm 16. It's there that King David saw in advance a prophecy of the resurrection of Jesus as well as its significance. Peter quotes the Greek translation of David's words in verses 25-28 of our text here today. "I saw the Lord always before me, for He is at my right hand that I may not be shaken; ²⁶ therefore my heart was glad, and my tongue rejoiced; my flesh also will dwell in hope. ²⁷ For You will not abandon my soul to Hades, or let your Holy One see corruption. ²⁸ You have made known to me the paths of life; you will make me full of gladness with Your presence."

✘ There are three main points that David taught in those verses regarding Jesus and His resurrection:

→ First, David recognized that His Lord and Messiah, Jesus was always beside him in his earthly life. Therefore, David's faith would not, and could not be shaken by any of the many hardships he encountered in life (v 25).

→ Second, David expressed great joy because of his confidence in Christ's presence, saying that this certainty meant his "flesh" could live filled with the "hope" that God would not abandon Jesus even in death (vv. 26–27). Yes, David knew well that Jesus' death would pay for and do away with the sin that separated David and all people, including you and me from God. So because God would not abandon Jesus who carried all of mankind's sin to the grave, then because David was joined to Jesus in faith, just as we are today in Baptism, God would certainly not abandon David or any one of us either.

→ Third, as we see in verse 28, David declared his conviction that, in Jesus, God would reveal to him the "paths of life" by which God would lead David and all believers to eternal joy in God's presence. As David concluded in Psalm 23, "and I shall dwell in the house of Yahweh forever" (Ps. 23:6).

✘ After all of this, Peter reminds his hearers that as one of God's prophets, David received a promise from God that one of his descendants would sit on his throne forever; on an eternal throne (vv. 29–30).

→ So in this prophecy, Peter says that David "foresaw and spoke about the resurrection of the Christ." Now just to be clear, the Greek New Testament word that David uses there is "Christ", which is equivalent to the Old Testament Hebrew word "Messiah". So Peter boldly declares here on Pentecost that Jesus is the promised Messiah (vv. 31–32).

→ Second, the very fact that Jesus was raised from the dead and is now seated at the right hand of the Father is indisputable evidence not only of God's approval of Jesus (vv. 22, 24, 32–33), but that Jesus is truly part of the Triune God; the fleshly person of God whom the sinners before Peter that day had crucified and killed (v. 23).

- ✘ Only then; once Peter has fully declared the truth of Jesus' death and resurrection for the sins of all, does Peter return to the meaning of Pentecost, which, again, is not ultimately about the Holy Spirit, but rather about how the Holy Trinity works together for our salvation.

II. God made Jesus both Lord and Messiah.

- ✘ And he wants us to clearly understand that our salvation only happens because God made Jesus both Lord and Messiah. Peter's sermon showed the people of his day what God's spectacular display in sending His Spirit meant for them.

- This crowd could not dispute the facts of what they had witnessed only moments earlier; that God fulfilled His promise through the prophet Joel to pour out His Holy Spirit on His people. In Joel 2:28 God said, "And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh."

- And in Acts 1:4 we're told that Jesus "ordered [His disciples] not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father...", telling them, "you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be My witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth" (Act 1:8).

- So now that this has actually happened before their very eyes, God the Father has proven to them, as verse 36 says, "that God has made [Jesus] both Lord and Christ (Messiah).

- This means that all of the blessings David foretold in Psalm 16 are now theirs through faith in Jesus.

- ✘ But what does it mean for you and me now today? What does it mean that we also know that Jesus is Lord and Messiah? The Holy Spirit's outpouring on Pentecost means the very same thing for you and me that it meant for David and Peter.

- It means that we too, when we recognize that our Lord and Messiah, Jesus, is beside us and with us, that all of the hardships that we encounter in life (v. 25) need not shake us in our faith. Just as it gave David strength and perseverance and comfort, so Jesus' constant presence with us today gives us strength when we face that difficult medical diagnosis, or when the many treatments or surgeries don't take the pain or the difficulty away, or when we find ourselves face to face with family or friends or others who are putting us down because of, or challenging our Christian faith. It helps us persevere when time and again something breaks down or goes wrong with the car or the house or who knows what so that we just can't seem to ever get on top of our finances. Yes, Jesus' presence as Lord and Messiah is the most substantial comfort any of us can ever have as we find ourselves deep in grief over our loved one's death or the loss of a job or a break up with a friend or spouse.

- Yes, the certainty of each person in the Holy Trinity working in unison intimately in our lives means that even in the midst of all the troubles in this life, we can still experience joy and hope and lasting peace because God, our loving Father, and Jesus, our victorious Savior, and the Holy Spirit who sustains us with His Word-and-Sacrament gifts will never leave us or abandon us (Heb. 13:5).

- ✘ Jesus' death on the cross has reconciled us to the Father by forgiving the sin that separated us. And now, since we have been joined to Jesus in Baptism and we know that God did not abandon Him in the tomb, we are assured that He will not leave us in death either (vv. 26–27).

- Since Jesus could not be held by death; because the price required of all sin has been paid in full, we know that the penalty of death, for anyone connected to Jesus by faith no longer sticks to us at our death either.

→ So as David said in verse 28, we also know that God has revealed to us the “paths of life”. Yes, both in life and in death Jesus is not only the “path” but as He says in John 14:6, He is the one and only “way” to eternal joy with the Father in heaven.

Conclusion

✘ So on this Festival of the Holy Trinity, we have God’s Word; we have His promise that each person in the almighty Godhead loves us deeply and is working constantly in their distinctive roles as Father, Son and Holy Spirit for our ultimate good and benefit. But even more we rejoice today in the glorious truth, as Peter reminds us, that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are acting in perfect unison to fulfill God’s deepest desire: the eternal salvation of our souls!

→ To Him be the glory today and forever. Amen.