

The Feast of the Blessed and Most Holy Trinity
4 June, Anno Domini 2023
St. John 3:1-17

Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Beloved Baptized of the Lord,

The Feast of the Trinity provides us the opportunity to consider the distinction between those things of God that have been revealed to us and those things that remain a mystery and therefore command only our worship and adoration. There are many unknown things about God we wish to know and it can be entertaining to speculate and theorize so long as our speculation doesn't turn us away from the true faith and we don't treat our conjectures about God into articles of faith. This is the error of so many like the Scholastics of old and those in our day who live by the spirit of the Enlightenment. They believe they are capable of understanding more than God has given man. Sometimes, much to the chagrin of our prideful and sinful flesh, we are only given to know a part of the mystery. In these matters especially, we are called to believe and say "Amen".

For example the famous *crux theologorum*, the cross of the theologian. Why do some believe and others do not? Many a Bible Class hour has been spent on this question. Why? Because we are not satisfied with what God has spoken. We want to know "How can these things be?" What we know from the clear revelation of God in Scripture is that God desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth and that God takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked but rather that he turn from his wickedness and live. We also know from the Word of God that all men are sinful from the moment they are conceived in their mother's womb and are therefore blind, dead, rebellious enemies of God who are incapable of faith apart from the working of the Holy Spirit. We know from Scripture that every intention of man's heart is only evil from his youth, that there is no one who does good, not even one, and that we can do no good thing apart from Christ. We know that God loved the world in this way and not in another - He gave His only begotten Son over to death that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. We know that Jesus commanded all nations to be baptized in the Name of the Blessed Trinity for the forgiveness of sins and that that promise is for anyone of any age. We know that whoever believes and is baptized will be saved but whoever does not believe will be condemned. We know from

Holy Scripture that faith comes alone by hearing and hearing by the word of Christ.

So we know a lot. But we don't know everything and that is what frustrates us. That is what causes us to grumble against God. We want God to justify Himself to us as to why not everyone hears the Word and why some who hear the Word do not believe. And some even foolishly use it as an excuse not to believe. This was the position Nicodemus found himself in when talking with Jesus. Nicodemus was trying to peer into things he had no business peering into, things that God had not and would not reveal. He was playing the part of the fool who was not content with God's revelation. He was trying to make God justify Himself. Of course he knew Jesus wasn't talking about re-entering your mother's womb when you are old. He was denying what God had revealed - that sinful man needed to be given new life by God, that God uses earthly means like water to accomplish the work of salvation - and trying to make God reveal His face to Nicodemus.

That is pride and presumption. It is the inborn sin of discontent with what God has spoken and we all suffer from it. It is particularly true when we are in the midst of suffering. Then we often bristle and insist that God explain and defend Himself. We demand that we be allowed to ascend into heaven to see into the secret counsel of God that we may sit in judgment against it and show God where He is in error. We see this when Job, having suffered the loss of everything God had blessed him with, began to demand to meet God in the courtroom so that God could make satisfactory answer for why He had allowed such affliction to befall such a righteous and blameless man. Job had forgotten his place as not only a creature of God but also as one who lives, not by bread or health or wealth, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God. He sought to know more of God than what God had revealed in His Word.

Adam and Eve sought the same. They believed the lie that they could and had the right to know all that God knew. They believed that God was withholding something good and necessary from them. But God never withholds what is necessary to deliver you from evil. He has delivered the whole truth of your salvation to you in His Word. There is no teaching regarding sin, man, Christ, justification, sanctification, the holy sacraments, the last things, or anything else that you need to believe for salvation that He has not graciously preserved for us in the writings of the prophets and the apostles. If it is in Scripture, you can be certain of it and it is required of you to believe it. That does not mean that you have to understand it or make sense of it. Some things you are given to know a great deal about - you know the whole Ten Commandments of God; you know that God

created everything in creation by His Word in seven days; you know that the Son of God was born of the Virgin Mary and offered up His life as payment for our sins; you know that by the washing of Holy Baptism you are joined to the death and resurrection of Jesus, delivered from eternal judgment, and made a child of God; you know that Christ Jesus gives you His Body and Blood in Holy Communion for the forgiveness of your sins and the strengthening of your faith; you know that God hears and answers your prayers; you know that the devil is a liar and murderer and that the world and your own sinful flesh all desire what is evil. These and so many other things you know because God has told you. You do not need to be in doubt regarding them.

Other things, though you know them, are a mystery, they are beyond your ability to fully wrap your mind around. That by no means makes them less true but before them we must simply bow our heads with the angels and rejoice that they are true. Before us today are two of the greatest and deepest of those mysteries that we will never be able to make sense of. The Blessed and Most Holy Trinity - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit - and the two natures of our Lord Jesus Christ who is both fully God and fully man who died for us. No man, no matter how wise or educated, can reason through these mysteries. They defy all human wisdom and understanding. But our finite wisdom is not the limit of all knowing or existence. Though, in the face of false teaching Christ's Church has faithfully confessed what Scripture teaches concerning these mysteries, making important distinctions and condemning all teachings that run afoul of Holy Scriptures, we are no closer to making sense of them. But we don't need to be. We only need to confess that they are and rejoice and praise God for them. We do not need to fear the world who foolishly imagines that we are capable of understanding all things and therefore rejects out of hand anything that runs contrary to either its understanding or its desires. That is utter foolishness that ends in destruction. Praise and glory, honor and power be you, O Lord God, for you have graciously revealed yourself to us that we may know you to be Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; you have redeemed us poor sinners from everlasting death and you have invited us to call upon you in our need. Blessed be your most Holy Name forever. Amen.

Children of God, you have the infallible and inerrant testimony of the Holy Scriptures which reveals in great clarity all that you need to know for salvation. Nothing is missing. Nothing needed is hidden from you. If it is in the Bible then you can say to the devil "God really did say." If it is not, then rejoice that you do not need to be troubled by it. Do not try to get around God's self-revelation of His Word to see those things which He has not revealed. You will not find answers. You will not find more reason to believe. You will not find peace. You will find

only darkness and doubt. His ways are unsearchable and His judgments are inscrutable. Instead, listen to the testimony of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Listen to the voice of the Shepherd who humbled Himself by taking on your flesh and becoming obedient to the point of being lifted up on the cross so that all who believe in Him might be saved. Humble yourself with the seraphim and join them in their hymns of praise to the holy and Triune God who has revealed Himself to you.

In the Name of +Jesus.

Pastor Ulmer

(We stand.) The peace of God which passes all human understanding keep your hearts and your minds through faith in Christ Jesus our Lord.