

The Feast of the Holy Trinity  
St. John 3:1-15  
May 27<sup>th</sup>, 2018  
Sts. Peter & Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church, UAC  
Simpsonville, SC  
Pastor Jerald Dulas

Unless One Is Born of Water and the Spirit

*In Nomine Iesu!*

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

**Prayer in Pulpit before Sermon:**

O Lord, send out Thy Light and Thy Truth, let them lead us. O Lord, open Thou my lips, that my mouth may show forth Thy praise. O Lord, graciously preserve me, lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be rejected. Amen.

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

If you are like me, you wonder about the use of this Gospel reading for this Sunday. We are celebrating the Feast of the Holy Trinity today. One would expect a Gospel that mentions all three Person of the Holy Trinity. However, we get a text that is about Holy Baptism. Our Gospel is about how we have been made by the Holy Ghost—the Lord’s Spirit—into a new creation. We have literally been born from above. The Triune God has taken our flesh, which on account of our sinfulness has no part in communion with the One, True Triune God, and makes it a new creation. We are now born from above. We now have a new spirit dwelling within us, on account of our Holy Baptism. And we can therefore enter into Heaven, as the Lord + Jesus tells Nicodemus in the Gospel from the Evangelist St. John.

The Triune God has placed His Name upon us at our Holy Baptism. We begin every Divine Service with a remembrance of that Name. What do we say to start every Divine Service? The pastor chants, “In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost,” and we, saying it with the pastor in our hearts, make the sign of the holy cross. The sign that we now possess the Name of the Triune God, since He placed it upon us at our Holy Baptism.

We start each Divine Service this way, to remind us Whose children we are. Since we are the Triune God’s children, we have a right to approach this altar that symbolizes His throne. The Son sits upon the throne of His Father so that He might send us His Holy Ghost. This altar represents His throne. This is why we bow or genuflect before it. It is not because it is an altar—it is not because this is some sort of holy furniture—it is because it is a throne; the place where our Lord + Jesus Christ sits to grant to us poor, miserable sinners the gifts that He won for us on the tree of the holy cross.

Having acknowledged Whose we are, and Whose Name we bear. We then acknowledge that we have no business being here; we confess our sins. Yes, God has placed His holy Name upon us. Yes, we are His children. But, we are disobedient children. We daily sin much. We all have those pesky sins, which try as we might, we can never shake off or avoid. Sin dwells within us. The Old Adam, which was drowned at our Holy Baptism, is a persistent demon, who keeps coming back to life to make our lives miserable and full of sin and regret.

The Old Adam must be daily drowned, through the penitent confession of our sins. What makes

a person penitent? You can usually tell the difference between a penitent person and an impenitent person by how they react to the Law. When you point out someone's sins—when you point out that a person is not living according to God's Law—there are two reactions: an impenitent person will take offense at the accusation. They will tell you that what you say is not true, that they are indeed a good person, and then they will probably deflect the charge back at you in some way.

A penitent person, however, will hear the Law, and agree with you. I am unworthy of the grace and mercy of the Lord. I am unworthy of forgiveness. I have no good thing living in me. I am a poor, miserable sinner. I have nothing of myself that is worthy of the forgiveness of which I ask. But, I do not need anything worthy in myself, for my sins have been buried in the wounds of the Christ. The Lord + Jesus bore my sins in His wounds on the holy cross, and when He died He took them with Him to the grave and buried them there.

When I was baptized, I joined my Lord + Jesus in the grave, and all that I inherited from Adam and all the sins which I added to my account through my own actions, were buried there in the grave, never to harm me again. So that, when I remember my Holy Baptism I am remembering once again that the Old Adam is drowned, my sins have been buried in the tomb of my Savior + Jesus Christ. And the Holy Ghost had taken my heart of flesh, and given me a heart full of His Spirit, so that I am a new creation. I am a holy, sinless child of the Triune God Who is now worthy to approach the throne of the Triune God just as a dear son is worthy to approach his dear father.

This is what our Lord + Jesus told Nicodemus when he came to the Lord at night. Nicodemus was no different than us. He wanted to know how he was to know that he was saved; how was he to know that he would not face the Triune God's eternal wrath and displeasure in Hell. Nicodemus was rightfully scared of ending up in Hell, as we all should be. For, Hell is not like many people today believe: just a different gathering place than Heaven. Such a view cheapens Heaven. Heaven is the place of eternal joys, and not just the fleeting joys of carnal pleasure, but the everlasting joys that come from being content and have peace in our souls.

Hell, on the other hand is the complete absence of joy. It is the complete absence of the Triune God. It is where the Lord God has removed His presence completely. What that means is that all the times when we have questioned whether the Lord was really present, because our lives were so miserable are going to be a thousand times worse, for the Lord was present with us during those trials, even if we were too weighed down with the grief of the moment to realize He was there for us. In Hell, the Triune God will not be there at all to hold back the full onslaught of your enemies the devil, the world, and your flesh.

This is the place in which Nicodemus was afraid to end up. It should also be the place in which we are afraid to end up. The salvation for both Nicodemus and ourselves is Holy Baptism. It is not our working and striving and doing and thinking, but it is our Lord's work. It is the Triune God's work of the Father sending us His One and Only-Begotten Son to take upon Himself our flesh, so that He might fulfill the Law which we are unable to fulfill, and to suffer our punishment for that disobedience on the tree of the holy cross. And after the Son buried our sins in His tomb, He rose again in order that after His ascension, He might send to us His Holy Ghost, Who works through the means of grace, like Holy Baptism, to take away our heart of flesh, and give us a heart that is a clean heart, and renews in us a right spirit.

The Holy Ghost creates and sustains in us faith to believe that the works of our Lord + Jesus are sufficient means for our salvation. Faith in the promises of our Savior + Jesus Christ is what makes a person penitent, ready to admit his faults and cling to the works of Christ. For that is what a penitent person does, he looks outside of himself for his salvation. He clings to the wounds of Christ, for in the Lord's wounds he sees his salvation. This is why we have a crucifix on the altar, for the first throne of

glory that our Lord sat upon was the throne of the holy cross. In bearing the shame of the whole world in His Body, He won for the glory of eternal life with Him in Heaven for all those who believe on His Name. Therefore, when we see our Lord + Jesus hanging on the tree and see the wounds that He bears, we see our sins nailed to that tree, so that we need no longer be burdened by them.

Our Triune God does not stop with just offering up His Son on the tree of the holy cross. Remember, just as we celebrated last week, and today is that Feast's octave, that our Lord + Jesus sent us His Holy Ghost. The Holy Ghost baptized us when we first entered the Church, and after instruction, and when we were ready to make a public confession of the things into which we were baptized, we were invited to come before this altar and receive the Lord's real and substantial Body and Blood given in bread and wine. Our Triune God, Whose Name we bear since our Holy Baptism, invites us to a meal with Him and all the saints on Earth and all the saints in Heaven.

The gates of Heaven have been opened to us so that we may enjoy this heavenly meal. But it is not opened because we are better than other people. No, the gates of Heaven are open to us, for through faith, we believe that our worthiness does not come from within, but from without. It comes to us through the works and merits of our Lord + Jesus Christ. Through those works He has made us poor, miserable sinners to be born from above through water and the Spirit. We are now a new creation, holy and pure in His sight. Whosoever will be saved, before all things it is necessary that he hold this catholic faith. For, whoever believes this shall not perish but have eternal life. In the Name of our Lord + Jesus Christ. Amen.

**Prayer in Pulpit after Sermon:**

Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto Thy Name give glory! I will extol Thee, O Lord, and I will praise Thy Name forever and ever. Amen.

**The Votum:**

The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Amen.

*Soli Deo Gloria!*