

Holy Trinity Sunday
Wicker Park Lutheran Church
Rev. Jason S. Glombicki
June 11, 2017

Contrary to popular belief, the word of the day is not “summer.” Rather, today’s word is “Trinity,” for Holy Trinity Sunday. What do we mean by Trinity? The most common Trinitarian formula is the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. One of my favorite Trinitarian formulas from St. Augustine is the lover, the beloved, and the love. Yet, as one colleague puts it, “The Trinity is not a doctrine to which we subscribe because it describes God ... The Trinity is, instead, a description of the experience of the church.”

Over the years, the church has described the Trinity as God who is beyond understanding. The Trinity is our God who is human, suffering, and fallible like us. The Trinity is within us and closer than our breath. The Trinity is unbelievably forgiving. The Trinity is constantly making surprises. The Trinity, as Paul wrote in our first reading, is a perfect communion. The Trinity is always loving, loving until the end, until all is complete.

In today’s gospel, Jesus sends the disciples to make more disciples in the name of that Trinity. To begin what the church calls “The Great Commission,” Jesus made a political statement saying, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me” (Matthew 28:18). You see, Jesus declared that the emperor, president, governor, mayor, prime minister, queen, pope, or even your pastor does not have authority apart from God. That is a political statement. It’s a statement of who rules and, ultimately, a statement of who has power and control. To be clear, political is different from partisan. While partisanship is not a part of our faith, political allegiance is central to

our faith. As one theologian notes, if we do not speak about politics then we abdicate our trust and faith in the authority of God. In our political silence, we declare our trust and faith in the authority of something or someone else. In the scriptures, God says a lot about power and how it's used. Therefore, our faith has a lot to say about politics.

Yet, Jesus does not simply call us to political commitment. He also instructions us to make disciples, to immerse them in the Trinity, to teach them, and to obey Christ's commands (Matthew 28:19-20). Christians, by definition, obey Christ. If we obey Christ then we look to his life, death, and resurrection as the best example.

Following Christ's example is difficult. Chaplain Natasha Darke reminds us that, Jesus' message was subversive. He was crucified for what he was teaching. The Romans and religious leaders didn't crucify him for fun. They crucified him because he was a political rebel. His political statements challenged the power structures. If you're not convinced, then here's one example of many: In Jesus' time the emperor *was* god, and the empire's mission was to conquer and control. The emperor's mission was highly successful. It was so successful that it inaugurated a reign of peace and prosperity that is mentioned in Luke's gospel. However, this peace and prosperity came at a cost. The price was people's complete submission to the power of Rome. Peace came as a result of fear. Prosperity was the byproduct of loyalty.

Yet Jesus' mission was different from Rome's. The Jesus of today's gospel announced a completely "different future: not a kingdom of control, domination and oppression; not a distant ruler, unreachable and uncaring. [Instead,] this is a God who walks among us; a God who dines with the outcasts, touches the diseased, and weeps for the lost. This is the reign of a God-in-relationship, a [Trinitarian] God whom we experience as three persons in communion; a God at whose centre [sic.] and core is a relationship of love."

Today's focus makes me wonder, is this a story from our world? Do certain leaders in our time demand loyalty at any cost? Do politicians, religious leaders, and terrorists invoke fear in an effort to control? Do people use weapons of the mind and munitions of metal to force others into submission? Of course! What's equally as troublesome is that we offer that power to them. With our thoughts, actions, and inactions, we give power and authority to political parties, companies, organizations, terrorists, political leaders, loved ones, religious leaders, and our own inner-demons. So, yes, our statement of commitment to God's mission of love, grace, and forgiveness is political. Our belief affirms that all power and control belong to a triune-God who is in perfect relationship. As such, we strive to emulate this perfect relationship within the world, because Christ calls us to be a public church.

In our public witness, God nudges us into relational disciple-making. Not disciple-making in the sense of converting people. Not making them join the church, or forcing them to accept a certain doctrine, or coercing them onto a committee. But rather disciple-making in a Jesus-fashion. A process where *we* first learn to love like Jesus, to give like Jesus, and to forgive like Jesus. Then, as we journey into discipleship, we can help people become followers by loving like Jesus, giving like Jesus, and forgiving like Jesus. In this assigned ministry of both becoming and making disciples, we remember that God is with us always, even to the end of the age. Amen. ¹

¹ This sermon heavily relied on thoughts and ideas from <https://onemansweb.org/theology/life-on-the-beach-matthew-24-36-44/trust-matthew-28-16-20-trinity-sunday.html>