

Holy Trinity Sunday

June 11, 2017

The Majesty and Wonder of the One True God Who is Three Persons

Romans 8:14-17

Rev. George Ferch

Fellow-Redeemed,

Please do not moan inwardly, or outwardly when the worship leader announces after the sermon, “Now we will confess our saving Christian faith in the words of the Athanasian Creed.” The faithful church fathers have handed down a treasure. Martin Luther regarded the Athanasian Creed as possibly the grandest production of the church since the time of the apostles.

This universal declaration of the Christian faith clearly states what the apostle wrote concerning our God in this part of his letter to the Romans. **The Majesty and Wonder of the One True God Who is Three Persons.** The Spirit who leads us. The Father who has adopted us. The Son who suffered for us.

The three separate and distinct persons in God’s divine nature together are active participants in God’s saving activity. The result of God’s saving activity is, “We are God’s children.” God’s saving activity endows the full rights of heirs. This is quite different from a slave. As adopted children we have the right to call God, “Abba,” in Aramaic, “Father” in English. It is the same address Jesus used in Gethsemane, “Abba. Father, everything is possible with you.”

How do I know I am a member of God’s family, and no longer a slave who must live life in fear? The Holy Spirit leads my life of sanctification. The Holy Spirit who called me out of unbelief now testifies to my spirit that I am God’s child. He keeps telling me and giving me in Word and sacrament that God has redeemed me. The good news of Jesus brings courage to my fearful heart.

I have had the privilege of a parallel experience with my adopted children. I adopted them and they call me father. I have loved them through life. I have reassured them that indeed they are my children if ever there was fear or doubt about that. They are equal co heirs with their brother who is not adopted just as we are with Christ, who is God’s one and only begotten, eternal Son.

Such a familial relationship with the one true God is possible because of the majesty and wonder of the One True God Who is Three Persons.

God the Father adopts us freely through the work of the Spirit in the word of Christ. He does so because his Father’s heart goes out to us. He gave us new life in Christ when we were nothing but dead, dry bones spiritually. We were strangers and aliens apart from him. We were without God and without hope in the world.

We behold the majesty and wonder of the one true God in his saving activity, “God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.”[John 3:16]

God sent his Son to be born, and to receive the name Jesus, because he would save us from our sins. That Son also true man was perfect for us. The Father declared Jesus’ perfect obedience to be credited to us and our disobedience credited to him. By that Great Exchange we and the entire world stand declared not guilty, in God’s sight.

Jesus' work was not only his active obedience. The majesty and wonder of the one true God in three persons is that the Son suffered for us. Jesus' suffering is already ours as the Father accepted Jesus' Passion as the satisfaction of the wages of my sin. Jesus' glory is ours as we share in his inheritance from the Father at the Father's right hand.

There is no cause and effect in my suffering for Christ as there is because he suffered for me. Jesus suffered as God and man under our sins but then received glory for his work by his resurrection and ascension. Paul is reminding us that suffering and glory go with the territory of being God's children, Jesus' brothers and sisters.

Our suffering comes from our connection to Christ and our holding on to his Word. If we do not give that up, forsake Christ, turn back to the old condition of slavery, then we also will enjoy that future glory.

Jesus willingly suffered and endured temptation, injustice, physical pain, rejection and even death in order to redeem us from our lost condition. As Jesus' brothers and sisters we can expect the same treatment from his and our enemies. If a bully beats up on your brother, there is a good chance the bully will take every opportunity to beat you up too.

In the end we will share in our brother's glory by the victory Jesus won over all the bullies who abused him. My sinful flesh is a bully. Unbelievers are bullies. Satan is a bully. Jesus glorious victory over them is ours.

When we speak about the work of one of God's persons, we are also speaking about the work of the other two. Our redemption and salvation are the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit's saving activity. Yet, as you soon will confess, each person is never the other.

I pray the Spirit's words from the apostle's pen will help you understand and better appreciate the creed that bears Athanasius' name, if not his authorship. Amen. <SDG>