

Wicker Park Lutheran Church

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May these words of my mouth and this meditation of all our hearts be acceptable to you O Lord, our Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer. Amen.

- It is a joy to be joining you not just on this Sunday morning, but many Sundays moving forward!
- I'm grateful and honored to have been asked to help provide some small leadership in this time of Sabbatical rest for the congregation. So thank you for having me over these next months, I'm looking forward to shaking the rust off my preaching and making sure that my magic hands I got in my ordination have not yet run out of juice.
- However, despite the gratitude I'm feeling, I'm also feeling some trepidation, because of all the Sundays in the liturgical calendar that could have served as my introduction to you as a preacher, Holy Trinity Sunday is not one that I would particularly call an easy one. Or a walk in the park.
 - Trinity Sunday is a day with highlighted focus on trinitarian nature of God
 - You might know this nature most recognizably through the phrases
 - Father, Son, Holy Spirit
 - But there are others like Creator, Redeemer, Sustainer
 - Or my favorite: The Lover, The Beloved, And Love.
 - Essentially, in Lutheran and other Protestant traditions, we confess faith in One God, who exists in three distinct parts. Not able to be separate from one another.
 - Not multiple Gods, just one, but still with distinct parts.
 - It's still a form of monotheistic belief, however, one that has stretched the limits of the definition rather liberally.
- Maybe you can start to understand why I find this is a difficult Sunday to preach.

- Any talk of the Trinity, in my experience, typically gets very convoluted very quickly, and usually at the end of it I'm asking "so what was the point."
- It's always a rather pointed challenge in taking a core doctrinal belief such as the trinity, over which countless ink has been spilled and arguments had over the centuries, and condense it down into a sermon on Sunday.
- For awhile, as I was preparing this sermon, I honestly was tempted to show up with a tub of Neapolitan ice cream and let that metaphor speak for itself.
 - Three parts, to one body. Distinct yet inseparable. The metaphor is perfect, the point gets across, sermon would be done and we could all eat ice cream.
- But, unfortunately, I fear that approach would not take seriously enough the subject matter of this Sunday.
 - Convoluted and tricky though it may be, the doctrine of the Trinity is still central to our faiths, and it makes up the bulk of the creeds that we as a collective church body confess to be true to our faith.
 - Apostolic, Nicene, and Athanasian creeds.
 - All of these creeds were written because of a large discussion (some bordered on controversy) of just how it is that God exists in three parts.
- That's a rather deep rabbit hole, though. And I think it's in all of our best interests for me to not spend too much time within its depths.
- Because, at the end of the day, I could spend a great deal of time and waste a great deal of breath going over the ins and outs of the minute details of how various people have tried to explain logically the trinity's existence. However, I don't believe that would speak any real applicable word to us today.
 - And while I can appreciate the trinity as a doctrine and hold deep respect and gratitude for all those who played a part in its coming into being, I don't take particular comfort in it these days.
 - I know I can only speak for myself right now, but in the face of everything going on this world, politically, environmentally, and systemically, I don't breathe a sigh of relief in the evenings saying:

- It's all gonna be ok because I have my faith in a God who exists in three persons but of one body, inseparable and distinct.
 - What I do take comfort in, is how, when pushed to its absolute limits, the doctrine of the trinity, and by extension faith in God in general, naturally leads us to accepting the necessity of mystery.
 - Because, even though hundreds of individuals have written countless words about God existing in trinitarian form, the fact remains that it doesn't make infallibly logical sense.
 - At some point we all have to agree that God, the trinity, the divine manifestation of cosmic love, is a mystery just beyond our human understanding.
 - And I find there to be freedom in this fact.
 - That despite human's best efforts, in our attempts to fully understand and explain God's complexity, it only naturally leads us to the acceptance of God as a divine mystery.
- And, in light of that, I find it especially poignant, that Holy Trinity Sunday falls in the liturgical calendar just one week after Pentecost, which is my favorite holiday.
 - The day of Pentecost is another one of the more mysterious moments in our faith, and I'm a firm believer that it doesn't get enough attention.
 - Pentecost reminds us that the same Spirit that moved over the chaotic waters during creation, all the way back in the book of Genesis, that very same Spirit is breathed into human bodies at Pentecost.
 - The very same Spirit that filled Jesus' human body now resides in you and me. And it is this Spirit that brings us to new life every day for the sake of loving our neighbors as we were loved.
- And, Jesus tells us about this Spirit. Mentioning in today's gospel reading from John that the Holy Spirit will be the one who guides humanity into truth.

- What's more, Jesus says "all that the Father has is mine. For this reason I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you."
 - In other words. The same Spirit that was at the very beginning of creation and within Christ, has been given to us as well.
- How mysterious then, that this God who is beyond human comprehension, who has accomplished miraculous things, who's full being we can only barely grasp, chooses consistently to dwell within humanity. Turning each of us into a beacon that bears the image of God.
- With all of this talk about definitions and identities, and the complexity of God's existence, I find it remarkably fitting that Holy Trinity Sunday lands smack in the middle of Pride month.
 - A month fully dedicated to radically celebrating and affirming every child of God's intrinsic goodness, even in the face of a socio-political reality that fights to discredit and revoke that same divine goodness.
 - If there is anything that the Trinity teaches us, it is that God is always so much more than even our best efforts and defining and understanding them.
 - God is more expansive, more mysterious, more loving, and more miraculous in God's existence than we might ever be able to put to words, and yet that does not keep us from celebrating the mystery's existence.
 - In much the same way, the vastness of human identity, of human love, of human expression, are also validated, affirmed, and radically celebrated across the nation in Pride festivals.
 - And in this expansiveness of Human identity and expression, we also catch a glimpse of the mysterious reality of the divine.
 - In the complexity of our neighbors identities, we catch a brief and marvelous glimpse of just how expansive and loving this God of ours is.
 - Perhaps the best way to celebrate the mysteries of the divine is to recognize the full beauty and goodness of all our human siblings.

- Maybe it seems counterintuitive, but I think there is great comfort and joy to be found in letting God's identity retain some of its unknowable mysterious nature.
 - In a world that seems increasingly obsessed with having the right, proper, and objective answer, there is something beautiful and comforting in a God who's true nature we can, at best, imperfectly point to.
- Because, at the end of the day, the mystery of God can be grasped but only up to a certain extent.
 - And maybe that's the whole point.
 - That our understanding of God is good enough, and that there is comfort to be found in the beholdable, yet unknowable mystery of Divine Love's existence.
- So on this Sunday of Holy Mysteries, let us see and recognize that the mystery is all around us and specifically in the bodies and lives of all whom we encounter daily. And may this mysterious Trinitarian being of cosmic love set us free to spread that same love.
 - In the name of the Lover, the Beloved, and Love herself. Amen.