

Sermon – Matthew 28:16-20
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Grace Lutheran Church
Holy Trinity – Year A
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“As It Was”

Friends in Christ, grace be unto you and peace in the name God the Father and our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

1. While this does not happen intentionally, it is often the case that Trinity Sunday at Grace is also Youth Sunday, that delightful day of the year when our young people lead us in worship. This year, due to the liturgical calendar and the timing of high school graduation, we missed by a week. Next week, we'll get to hear from an amazing young preacher. But that leaves me in the pulpit today, tempted to do what our young preachers are always wise enough to avoid: explain God. What does it mean to say that God is three-in-one and one-in-three? How can such bad math be at the heart of our confession? Such talk about God can be dangerous, always dancing on the edge of heresy, if not diving right into the deep end of it. We are tempted to reduce the Triune God to one god with three ways of being in the world. Or to erase the Triune name in favor of activities, Creator, Redeemer, Sustainer, instead of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. And God does engage in many activities, does create and redeem and sustain us. But none of this gets us where we need to be, and all of it leaves us with a much-reduced image of the God in whose image we are made. It's a little bit like trying to pour the ocean into a coffee cup. You're left with a little bit, but the mystery and majesty are gone.
2. Perhaps Trinity Sunday is not so much an opportunity for us to speak about the Triune God as it is an invitation for us to listen the Triune God who

- speaks to us. We find ourselves, here on the first Sunday after Pentecost, at the feet of Jesus as he is about to ascend to his Father's right hand, to assume his place of authority over this world. His parting words to his disciples, to us, are not an explanation. His words are a command, a commission. "Go, therefore," he tells us. Because all authority in heaven and earth belongs to Jesus, just so are we sent in that power to proclaim Jesus to others. To make disciples, and to do so in the Triune name. This authority, this power, invoked by Jesus is not power as it is wielded in this world. It is not the power of a dictator who oppresses others. It is not a small, selfish power that holds tightly to whatever it can. It is a power that lives to give itself away. A power whose strength is love; the very love that exists within and overflows the Triune relationships between Father, Son, and Spirit.
3. Jesus sends us to others, which is what he's been doing all along, of course. Not long before his death, Jesus tells his friends where he will continue to be found. Not on a lofty throne but in the needs of others. In the great parable of sheep and goats, Jesus locates himself in the hungry and thirsty, with the stranger and naked, among the sick and the imprisoned. The power of the Kingdom of Heaven is service, not spectacle. Less UFC fight on the White House lawn, more setting aside violence in the victory of peace. Jesus speaks. Go, he says, and continue to find me where I always am. First in water and Word, bread and wine, and then in one another. For it is in them, as in you, that Jesus chooses to dwell. For God has spoken, declaring that you who were sinful are now forgiven; that you who were dead are alive.
 4. God has forever been the One who speaks and makes things new. This isn't the back-up plan; it is how God has always been. In the beginning, in the midst of nothingness and chaos, God begins the divine work, the Triune relationships overflowing and making room for creation. The Spirit broods. The Word goes forth. God creates, and what God creates is good. God's Word, from the very beginning, is a justifying word. God creates and declares the

divine handiwork good. God creates and declares *you* good. And when we in our sin attempt to undo this work, God speaks again: For the sake of Jesus Christ, you are forgiven and you are made new. God's Word doesn't simply describe. It does what it says.

5. You, friends, are baptized. Marked with the cross of Christ, sealed by the Holy Spirit, children of the same heavenly Father, you are welcomed into the very life of God. Here, there is room for all. So much so that God is not done but sends you now to others. As the preacher Matthew Skinner writes, "Jesus presents baptism as part of the process of adding collaborators and accomplices to a movement that places mercy and compassion at its core." Baptism, "calls the baptized to action and promises them divine empowerment for that action."

6. In just a few minutes, the feast of the Triune God will again be spread before you. How this works is, of course, another mystery. But not every mystery needs solving. Years ago, when we were living in South Carolina and Greta was about two years old, she spoke up from the back seat as we were driving home from worship one Sunday. "Daddy," she said, "I want the Jesus bread next week," I knew in that moment that she understood as much about the sacrament as anyone else, as if it's our understanding that matters most. And she's been receiving Holy Communion ever since. We may not understand fully the inner workings of the sacrament; in fact, I'm not sure I'd trust anyone who says they do. But we know in faith that Jesus is present in the Jesus bread, and in the wine, too. And we know in faith that this meal welcomes us into the divine dance, for the Son gives us to Father and Spirit. The mystery is not meant to be solved but lived. The majesty is not meant to be parsed or diagrammed but worshipped and praised. While the God who gifted us with intellects no doubt delights in our efforts to comprehend, in the end our faith is less to be understood, more to be shared. For the Word that still speaks is alive in us. God has put the Word in our mouths, on our

lips, as we speak grace and peace into this broken but still good world that God still loves. So come and eat. Then go and tell. You belong to God – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. And this good news, like the Triune God, is too big to contain. So go, and know that Christ is with you in all things and at all times, until the end of the age. The end of all things, when our need to understand shall give way to the full presence of the Trinity, in whose loving life we will live forever. Amen.

And now may the peace that passes all understanding keep your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus, this day and forever. Amen.