

## Sermon Notes on Mt. 28:16-20, Trinity Sunday

1. Many Christian churches confess the Athanasian Creed on Trinity Sunday because it teaches the doctrine of the Trinity so clearly. The revealed and saving God is Triune, one God in three persons. This is clearly taught also in the OT. For example Is. 61:1. "In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost" is the clearest statement of the Trinity in the Bible. The three ecumenical creeds are based on this phrase. "Name" means revelation and power. There are not three but only one. The Triune God is the saving God. The Father sent the Son, the Son became man and saved us, the Holy Spirit came on Pentecost to bring this message to all nations.
2. Jesus had appeared three times to His disciples after His resurrection, twice in Jerusalem (Jn. 20:19-29) and once at the Sea of Tiberias (Jn. 21:1-23). Mt. 28:16-20 is the fourth recorded appearance. This passage is parallel to Mk. 16:15-18 and very likely also I Cor. 15:6. Shortly thereafter Jesus ascended into heaven at Bethany, east of Jerusalem. Lk. 24:50. There were only eleven because Judas had not been replaced.
3. Three times Jesus told the disciples to go to Galilee after His resurrection. Mt. 28:32; 28:7.10.
4. Vs. 17 says "when they saw Him". Very likely that means that He suddenly appeared to them as in His other appearances. From His conception in Mary's womb into all eternity the entire Godhead abides in Jesus. Before His suffering and death He did not always show the qualities of His divinity. But He proved it with His miracles and the transfiguration. Ever since He became alive in the tomb He uses His divine powers all the time. After His resurrection He appears and disappears but His divinity and humanity are everywhere. He said "Lo I am with you alway". He is with us also as a man.
5. Vs. 17 also says that "some doubted". They did not doubt His resurrection. Very likely His sudden appearance caused them to doubt. But when He spoke to them, evidently they believed. It is a comfort to a sinner like me to hear that even some of Jesus' disciples doubted. But Jesus did not scold them. On Ascension Day (Acts 1:6) some of the disciples asked Him a foolish question about the kingdom. But He gently corrected their false thinking.
6. Jesus says: "All authority has been given TO ME". This must mean His human nature because His divine nature already had all things. Read Mt. 9:6 and 11:27 and Jn. 3:35. The Father has given all things into the hand of His Son's human nature. Therefore, Jesus, the God-man, has all authority over everything in heaven and on earth.
7. John the Baptist, his disciples and Jesus' disciples baptized people during Jesus' public ministry. But that was limited to Israel, the Jews. See Jn. 1:31. But Jesus' command to His disciples in Mt. 28 is for all nations, both Jews and Gentiles. Before and after, both baptisms forgive people their sins.
8. The church makes disciples of people by baptizing them and by teaching them. Sometimes they baptize before they teach, for example infants, and very often they teach before they baptize. Cf. the Book of Acts.
9. Teaching people to observe all that Jesus commanded means the whole Bible, Law and Gospel. Pastors must be good teachers for men, women and children. Nothing keeps people with the church as does good preaching and good teaching. Always prepare carefully. Don't be sloppy!
10. Baptism and teaching reveal the saving Trinity to the sinner. The Father adopts us as His children. Gal. 3:26-27. The Son becomes our Redeemer. Eph. 5:26; Gal. 3:27. The Holy Spirit becomes our Comforter. Eph. 1:14. He lives in us. I Cor. 3:10. The whole Trinity lives where there is faith in Christ. Jn. 17:21.
11. Vs. 17 says that the eleven worshipped Jesus. This is the first time that the Gospels mention them worshipping Jesus. Once and for all they truly realized that this Jesus was true God and the Savior of the world.
12. God comes to us only through the means of grace, Word and Sacraments.

Sermon Outline on Mt. 28:16-20, Trinity Sunday

Theme: IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER AND OF THE SON AND OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Introduction: Our theme is a summary of an eternal truth. Both the OT and the NT teach the Trinity of God. God said: "Let US make man." Gen. 1:26. The word for God in Hebrew is ELOHIM which is plural not singular. Ps. 110 begins with "The Lord said to my Lord." Is. 61 begins "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me." Jesus quotes this of Himself at Lk. 4:18. The word "Me" stands for Jesus. In the NT the Trinity is taught in many places. For example, Jn. 14:16; 14:26; 15:26; 16:7. The Triune God is the saving God. We begin our worship services in the name of the Triune God.

I-GOD REVEALS HIMSELF AS THREE IN ONE AND ONE IN THREE

- A-There is only one God. The first commandment (Ex. 20:3) reads "You shall have no other gods before ME." There is only one God. "You have not listened to ME" God says at Jer. 25:7. At Gen. 17:1 God told Abraham: "I am Almighty God; walk before ME and be blameless." God told Moses (Ex. 3:14) "I am Who I am." God said at Deut. 6:4 "Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is One." St. Paul says at I Cor. 8:4 and 6: "There is no other God but ONE" and "There is only ONE God." Jesus says at Jn. 10:29 "I and My Father are ONE." There are not three gods but only One God, one in essence, from all eternity.
- B-There are three persons in One God. I Cor. 8:6 reads "There is only one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we for Him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, through whom are all things." The unity and Trinity are here mentioned side by side. When Jesus was baptized the Father spoke from heaven, the Son was being baptized and the Holy Spirit descended as a dove. Mt. 3:13-17. When Jesus ascended to heaven He prayed the Father to send the Spirit. Jn. 14:16; 14:26; 15:26; 16:7. All three creeds (Apostles, Nicean, Athanasian) ascribe creation to the Father, redemption to the Son and sanctification to the Holy Spirit. God is one in essence and three in persons. We cannot fathom that mystery but we believe it. All three articles of the creed are by faith only. We cannot fully understand but we believe what God says.

II-THE TRIUNE GOD AND THE GREAT COMMISSION

Everything necessary for our salvation has been done. Now our work is to bring this salvation to the whole world. We are to go to all nations.

- A-The Almighty God stands behind us and goes with us. All power in heaven and on earth has been given to the God-man Jesus Christ. He is King of kings and Lord of lords. He will reign forever. The Father gave Christ's human nature all things. Mt. 11:27. Jn. 3:35 says "The Father loves the Son and has given all things in His hand. He who believes in the Son has life eternal." Jesus uses all power in heaven and earth to save sinners. The last vs. of our text assures us that Jesus stays with us til the end of the age. Father, mother, sister, brother may forsake us but Jesus will never forsake us. He is faithful to His promise.

- B-The Revelation and the Power of the Triune God empower us and our work. "Name" in our text means "revelation and power". The Triune God has revealed Himself to us. The Triune God gives His means of grace power. We make disciples of people by doing two things: baptizing and teaching. That is the work of the church. Sometimes we baptize before we teach. Sometimes we teach before we baptize. But both baptism and the teaching have God's saving power in them. Baptism and teaching forgive people and give them faith for everlasting life. Preachers must take care to believe the Lord and do what the Lord says here. Is. 55 says that God's Word is like rain from heaven which will do as the Lord wills. Peter says that baptism saves us just as the waters of the flood saved Noah.

Conclusion: The church has only one work, to save sinners. God has given the church the power and the means to do this work.

Sermon Notes on Jn. 3:1-15, Trinity Sunday

1. This Sunday is dedicated to the doctrine of the Trinity, one God in three persons. The Triune God is the saving God. Many churches use the Athanasian Creed, rather than either the Apostles or the Nicean Creed, on this day. The Trinity underlies Jn. 3:1-15.
2. Vss. 1-10 are a dialogue between Nicodemus and Jesus. Vss. 11-21 are a monologue by Jesus. Jn. 2:23-25 describe the people in Jerusalem who were impressed by Jesus' signs. But their faith was very weak. Jn. 3:1-12 describes Nicodemus who, although he was a member of the Sanhedrin and a teacher of Israel, was not yet a Christian. The only remedy for unbelief is the Gospel of Jesus Christ.
3. Three of the "Truly, truly" sayings in Jn. occur here, vss. 3, 5, and 11. There is a total of 24 in this Gospel.
4. Until a sinner is regenerated or born again he is spiritually blind, dead and an enemy of God. He cannot help himself. See Js. 1:18; I Pet. 1:23; Jn. 1:13; Lk. 8:11. The Law cannot cause rebirth. Only the Gospel does that. Baptism causes rebirth. Jn. 3:5; Tit. 3:5; I Pet. 3:21; Eph. 5:26; Acts 2:38. That's why Jesus commanded that all nations be taught and baptized. Mt. 28:19.
5. Vs. 6 tells us that physical birth only produces sinful flesh but birth caused by the Holy Spirit causes a person to be spiritual. II Cor. 5:17 says: "If anyone is in Christ he is a new creation." The Spirit's gift of faith in Christ causes rebirth, a new creation.
6. Nicodemus became a Christian. See Jn. 7:50 and 19:39.
7. Jesus is neither flattered by Nicodemus nor does He talk down to him.
8. The Kingdom of God on earth is the total number of those who truly believe in Jesus. When these people die they enter the Kingdom of Glory.
9. The illustration about the wind in vs. 8 simply means that just as the movement of the wind, though we experience it, is incomprehensible to us, likewise, though we experience conversion, we cannot explain it.
10. In vs. 12 Jesus distinguishes between the observable work of the Gospel on earth, and the unobservable person and work of Jesus. The observable work is baptism and conversion. The unobservable is likewise twofold: The Son of man, Jesus, is present both in heaven and on earth, and, the crucifixion of the Son of man saved the world.  
*by* These four items, two observable and two unobservable, can be attained only the faith of rebirth.
11. The serpent in the wilderness, Num. 21:8, was an O.T. type of the crucifixion of Jesus. Those who looked at the brazen serpent lived. Those who believe in the crucified Jesus will live forever. The serpent brought sin and death into the world. Hebr. 2:14 tells us that through death Jesus destroyed the devil who had the power of death. In this way Jesus reconciled all people to God. I Cor. 5:14 says: "If One died, all died." That is truly remarkable, but true.
12. In Jn. 3:14 Jesus says: "The Son of man must be lifted up (crucified) Jesus often said "I must." See Lk. 2:49; 9:22; 17:25. God had so willed it and Jesus knew that He must do it. But He did it willingly. Hebr. 10:9; Jn. 10:17-18. All true love always begins only with the love of God in the crucifixion of Jesus Christ.
13. In Jn. 3:7 Jesus says "You must be born again." It is absolutely necessary or otherwise we remain dead in our sins. And, secondly, we must be born again because it is God's will. Therefore, the musts in Jesus' life and my life are the will of God and are my salvation.
14. Jn. 3:1-21 contains the main central Christian truths: The Trinity (Father, Son and Holy Spirit); the necessity of rebirth through baptism; Jesus, true God and true man in one person; the crucifixion of Jesus which saves all men; the new life of the believer compared with the dead life of the unbeliever; faith saves, unbelief damns; Jesus, the Light of the world.

Theme: THE SON OF MAN MUST BE LIFTED UP AND I MUST BE BORN AGAIN

Introduction: The word "must" occurs twice in our text, the first with reference to the necessity of sinful man's rebirth in vs. 7 and the second with reference to the crucifixion of the Son of man in vs. 14. These two "musts" are our central thoughts.

### I-YOU MUST BE BORN AGAIN

A-Why this is necessary. In Vs. 5 Jesus says that man cannot enter the Kingdom of God, the family of believers, as he is. This is found everywhere in the Bible. At Jn. 6:44 Jesus says: "No one can come to Me unless the Father draws him." Why not? Eph. 2:1 says that natural man is dead in trespasses and sin. Rom. 5:6 says that while we were yet without strength Christ died for the ungodly. Rom. 5:10 tells us that before we were reconciled to God we were his enemies. I Cor. 2:14 says that natural man is not spiritual and does not receive the things of God's spirit. Jesus summarizes all of this in Jn. 3:6 when He says: "That which is born of the flesh is flesh." Natural man is spiritually blind, dead and an enemy of God. It is impossible for him to save himself. Jesus said at Mt. 19:26 "With men this is impossible but with God all things are possible."

B-What this means. In vs. 3 Jesus says: "Unless a person is born again he cannot see the Kingdom of God," and in vs. 5 He says "Unless a person is born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter the Kingdom of God," and in vs. 6: "That which is born of the (Holy) Spirit is spirit(ual)." In Num. 21 when the Israelites sinned they were bitten by snakes and could not save themselves or avoid death. The help which God afforded was absolutely necessary. Time and again the OT says: "Restore us, O God." See Ps. 80:3,7; 85:4; Jer. 31:18; Lam. 5:21. These are only a few of the many instances. How does God do this? In and through baptism, the water and the Spirit, God causes rebirth, regeneration. This is found in many places in the NT. See Tit. 3:5; I Pet. 3:21; Eph. 5:26; Acts 2:38; Mt. 28:19. Baptism makes salvation possible. It washes away our sins. It brings the Holy Spirit. Through the Word it gives faith in the promises of God.

### II-THE SON OF MAN MUST BE LIFTED UP

A-Why this is necessary. Jesus often said: "I must." See Lk. 2:49; 9:22; 17:25. Just as lifting up the serpent in the wilderness (Num. 21) was God's will, so the birth, life, death and resurrection of Jesus were God's will. In prophecy and fulfillment Jesus said to the Father: "Lo, I come to do your will." Ps. 40:7-9; Hebr. 10:8-10. In His agony in the Garden He said: "Thy will, not mine, be done." Mt. 26:39. It was according to the plan of the Triune God. Gal. 4:4-5 tells us: "When the full time came God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the Law, to redeem those under the Law so that we might receive the full rights of sons." When Peter tried to deter Jesus from God's will Jesus spoke harsh words to Peter. Mt. 16:21-23. That's why Jesus told Nicodemus: "Just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of man be lifted up."

B-What this means. Just as the look of faith kept the poisoned Israelites alive in Num. 21, so the look of faith in the crucified Christ gives eternal life to lost mankind. That's what Jesus says at Jn. 3:15. When Jesus commented on His crucifixion at Jn. 12:32 He said: "When I am lifted up from the earth, I will draw all people to Myself." The crucifixion of Jesus not only pays for our sins and gives us eternal life, but it also draws all people to Jesus. The crucifixion of Jesus gives us faith in Jesus to live forever. That's why Paul said: "God forbid that I boast in anything except the cross of our Lord, Jesus Christ." Gal. 6:14. That's why Paul said: "We preach Christ crucified, to the Jews an offense and to the Gentiles foolishness, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. He must be lifted up and I must be born again."