

MINISTRY BY MAIL
Lutheran Conference of Confessional Fellowship
www.lutheranlccf.org
Trinity Sunday, June 3, 2012

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(Hymns found in The Lutheran Hymnal, CPH, 1941)

Hymns: 239, 237:1, 244, 246, 644.

Lessons: Genesis 1:1-3, 2 Corinthians 13:11-14, John 10:22-39.

Sermon Text: Matthew 28:16-20

Sermon by Pastor Robert Mehlretter

In the name of Jesus Christ, Dear Fellow Redeemed,

Today is the Sunday we call Trinity Sunday. This day was especially set aside by the early New Testament church to emphasize the doctrine of the Triune God.

There are many in the world who today knowingly and intentionally deny the doctrine of the Triune God. But there are perhaps more people who unknowingly also reject the doctrine of one true God, Father Son, and Holy Ghost, or Holy Spirit.

Today, let's briefly review

THE SCRIPTURE DOCTRINE OF THE TRIUNE GOD

- 1. Our text has been called "The Great Commission".**
- 2. What Scripture teaches about the Triune God.**
- 3. A few false, unscriptural ideas about "god".**
- 4. What believers are to do with God's doctrine.**

Matthew reports very little of what Jesus did after his resurrection. But what he does tell us is extremely important, as if any part of God's Word could really be more important than any other part.

These verses are the total of what Matthew reports after Jesus' resurrection except for events which happened on the day of resurrection. This was at the end of Jesus living on earth, shortly before he ascended into heaven.

His disciples were gathered with him on a mountain in Galilee.

This is what has been called "The Great Commission". To better understand what Jesus is saying, we should understand what a 'commission' is. It is a formal command granting the power to perform various acts or duties. It is an authorization or command to perform specified acts. It is the authority to act for, in behalf of, or in place of another. It is also used of a task or matter entrusted to one as an agent for another. That is what God does here. He gives his disciples, his followers, including us here today the authority and power to act on his behalf. These words also teach us who gives that authority and what kind of God we are to proclaim to anyone who will listen, and to the very entire world!

We use the word "Triune" to refer to the God that we, by God's grace, have come to believe in. That is a word that means three in one: three persons in one God, three distinct persons, each with distinct although very much related work, and yet only one God. We also use the word "Trinity" to refer to the Triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Neither of those words "Triune" nor "Trinity" are found in the Bible. But the teaching is plainly found in the Bible.

One bible study book lists nearly 90 passages that speak of the Holy Trinity, and it doesn't even include Genesis 1: 1-3, our Old Testament lesson. That lesson plainly teaches the true God: Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. How? *"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth."* As you confessed in the Creed this morning, the chief work of the Father is creation – making something out of nothing. In the second verse of the Bible you plainly have mention of the Holy Spirit: *"Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over*

the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters.” So where is Jesus Christ? *“And God said, ‘Let there be light,’ and there was light.”* Did you notice HOW God created it? By his Word. God said. So how do we know that refers to Jesus Christ?

We read in John 1:1-14: *“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of men. A few verses later we read: “The true light that gives light to every man was coming into the world. He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God – children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God. The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.”*

If there was any doubt that Jesus Christ is “the Word”, it is plainly evident in verse 14: *“The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.”*

In our communion liturgy we confess our faith in the words of the Nicene Creed, on page 22 in The Lutheran Hymnal. Written in 325 A. D. by Christians representing all the truly Christian churches in the world at that time, it plainly, more clearly, and in more detail teaches about the Triune God than does the Apostles Creed, which wasn't formally written but just developed as Christians sought to publicly confess who their God was. Why was the Nicene Creed written? Because false teachers had corrupted the plain, clear teachings of the Bible, and it was necessary to state what one must clearly believe and confess. The devil constantly is attacking and perverting men so that they do not cling to and believe what the plain Word of God teaches.

The Nicene Creed, as well as the Athanasian Creed (page 53 in the hymnal), written in 450 A. D. by Christians, also to plainly and publicly set forth what the Bible teaches, is part of our public confession. It states to the world ‘this is what we believe, teach, and confess.’

History books speak of the Jews as being one of the first people in the world with the idea of monotheism. That is the idea of one god. Not many gods. Not a god of sunshine, and a god of rain, and a god of the winds, and a goddess of love, and a god for just about anything you can imagine. We think of primitive peoples praying to many different gods. But there are many examples from history of so-called civilized peoples with many Gods. Look at the gods of the ancient Greeks, people who considered themselves, and are considered to be especially civilized people: Zeus, the supreme God of ancient Greeks, his wife Hera, Poseidon, god of the sea, Dionysius, god of wine, Athena, goddess of crafts, domestic arts, and of war, Aphrodite, goddess of love, Hades, god of the dead and the underworld, and many, many more. Most of these pagan gods were also adopted by the Romans, and given different names, Roman names. Zeus, for example, was called Jupiter. Other pagan – that is, non-Christian – religions today also have many gods. Ask a Hindu or other person from India who practices native religions about their many gods. Then, of course, there are those informational television programs which teach us about other primitive or pagan peoples and often present such pagan beliefs about gods as something which should be preserved, so that such people can keep their native culture.

The prevailing attitude among many people, even those who consider themselves Christians, is the false, unscriptural idea that there are many roads that lead to God. The poem by Ella Wheeler Wilcox puts that false idea this way:

“All roads that lead to God are good.

What matters it, your faith, or mine?

Both center at the goal divine

Of love's eternal Brotherhood.”

The poem closes with these stanzas:

“A thousand creeds have come and gone,

But what is that to you or me?

Creeds are but branches of a tree –

The root of love lives on and on.
Though branch by branch proved withered wood,
The root is warm with precious wine.
Then keep your faith, and leave me mine
All roads that lead to God are good."

Just look at our society today. We want to pick and choose, even our religion and the gods we want to believe in. We don't even want to be served food that someone else chooses. If sometimes people eat in a restaurant and are told "no substitutions" that means you get what's put on your plate. But we want to pick and choose our food. And so too, human beings want to pick and choose their spiritual food. If something isn't appealing to them at that particular time they will say 'oh, I don't want to do that. Why should I have to believe in that "god"? I don't have to obey those rules.' Now think about how that changes from time to time. The sinful flesh of every human says 'I don't want to obey the 10 commandments right now.' Or 'I don't want to obey this law or that law of the land right now.' We may think, at any age, but perhaps especially when we are young, that we don't want to or need to obey God's commandments. Our flesh says 'What's this thing about the sixth commandment, where God says you are supposed to be married before having sex.' Look at the world's disregard for what God commands. You can even look at your neighbors and see their disregard for that sort of thing. But years later, after we have married and we have our own children, we don't want them to make the same kind of mistakes that we did. Regardless of the lifestyle of people when they are young, there comes a time when parents want their children to follow the rules. But people want to pick and choose at spiritual food, and the kind of god that they want.

But there is only one true God. There is only one way to life after death. That is through Jesus Christ, through the Triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

Peter, confessing before the high priest and other leaders of the Jews after Jesus' ascension into heaven said: ***"If we are being called to account today for an act of kindness shown to a cripple and are asked how he was healed, then know this, you and all the people of Israel: It is by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified but whom God raised from the dead, that this man stands before you healed. He is 'the stone you builders rejected, which has become the capstone.' Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved."*** (Acts 4:9-12)

There is no other name by which men can be saved eternally. You heard God's command to Teach – to Make Disciples of – all nations. There is only one way to eternal life, and that is through Jesus Christ, God's Son, the only Savior for mankind. He told his disciples to go and do something. They are to teach. They are to make disciples. Now that implies doing or saying something to teach about one's position, or one's work or one's beliefs in order to have one person follow another; to accept the beliefs and position and teachings of another.

Jesus' followers are to teach, to make disciples of all nations. No one is to be excluded. People of every skin color, every ethnic background, every race are to hear that message of salvation.

And believers are to baptize. This was a special rite or ceremony previously practiced by John called the Baptist. This means taking water and applying it in a ceremonial manner, and in Baptism as Jesus now commands it, we have the grace of God. It has become a sacrament, that is, a sacred act instituted by Christ himself, using the earthly element of water connected with God's Word in which the forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation are given.

And believers are to teach. It doesn't stop with baptism. The contents of what they are to teach is summarized in the God they are to teach about. Followers of Jesus are commanded to preach the entire message of Jesus without embarrassment and without compromise. We are to teach EVERYTHING that Jesus commanded, excluding nothing taught in Scripture.

And we have the comfort of knowing that Jesus is with us every step of the way. He has all power, all authority in heaven and on earth. And he is and will be with us always, even to the end of the world. What comfort this gives us! What confidence we have, knowing our Savior, our God, the Triune God is with us always. Amen.