
SUNDAY, MAY 30, 2010
TRINITY SUNDAY
John 16:12-15 ("All that the Father has")

TODAY'S SERMON THEME:

There is no doubt that the Lord wants us to give our best in all we do for Him and for others. He gave us His best, and He wants us to do likewise. At the same time, the Lord's own example demonstrates that while giving our best is always spiritually rewarding, it can also be risky, physically and emotionally. The rewards, though, are heavenly. Literally. On this Trinity Sunday, we give thanks to the Father, through His Son Jesus, in the power of the Holy Spirit. One God. World without end.

1. My junior high basketball coach died last month in Nacogdoches, Texas. His name was George Baldock, and he was a great man. A man who spent more than 40 years as a coach, teacher, and mentor to tens of thousands of students. Coach Baldock made the world a better place, one life at a time, one child at a time, one athlete at a time. And he taught me a powerful lesson about giving my best ALL of the time. Not half of the time. Not three-fourths of the time. Not even 99 percent of the time. ALL of the time. Coach Baldock began teaching me in the seventh grade, when I made the seventh grade football team and he was my coach. Almost immediately, he noticed that I had a tendency to "blend in" with the players on the field. If the action on the field was going at a certain pace, I tended to "blend in" with it. If a play was slow in developing, I was slow in responding. In football terms, this meant that I was always a second or two late. And to be brutally honest with myself, it meant that I let other players do the heavy hitting. I was always there . . . but I was always a second or two late. I was very comfortable playing THAT kind of football. A lackadaisical, cautious style of playing. Coach Baldock picked up on it almost immediately. **To this day, I do not remember exactly what he said to me, but I do remember the tone of his voice.** He was a gentle giant of a man -- about 6-5, and he towered over most of the junior high students. He spoke to me in a calm, but very forceful, voice. I think he said that I was cheating myself, as well as letting the team down. I should be a leader. Not a follower.

2. Something changed in my behavior about halfway through that season. And it carried over into the next season, where I worked my way onto the ninth grade varsity team a year early. And in my first varsity game, I flew all over the field, making tackles from every angle. And then I flew across the field and knocked the opposing runner out of bounds with such force that it knocked the breath out of him . . . and shattered my right arm. Football was over for me at that point. **But I learned that giving your best can be incredibly rewarding, and incredibly dangerous. Giving your best can bring great honors, but it can also be hazardous to your health.** I never played football again. But I did play basketball for Coach Baldock in the ninth grade, led our team in scoring and

rebounding, and made two all-tournament teams and the All-City first team. (I still have my old junior high letter jacket with all the award-patches.)

3. The main point I want to make this morning -- on this Sunday after the Day of Pentecost, this Trinity Sunday -- is a simple one:

There is no doubt that the Lord wants us to give our best in all we do for Him and for others. He gave us His best, and He wants us to do likewise. At the same time, the Lord's own example demonstrates that while giving our best is always spiritually rewarding, it can also be risky, physically and emotionally. The rewards, though, are heavenly. Literally. On this Trinity Sunday, we give thanks to the Father, through His Son Jesus, in the power of the Holy Spirit. One God. World without end.

4. Without question, there is no greater mystery in the Christian faith than the Doctrine of the Holy Trinity. The doctrine that our God, who is One, nevertheless chose to reveal Himself to us in three Persons -- the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. One God, united in substance, but existing in three Persons. Three in One; One in Three. The ancient creed of St. Athanasius (which is on page 864 of the Book of Common Prayer) dates from the fourth century; and it goes to great lengths to proclaim the UNITY of our God. "We worship one God in Trinity, and Trinity in Unity, neither confounding the Persons, nor dividing the Substance." Each Person in the Trinity is holy; but there are not three "holies." Each Person in the Trinity is eternal; but there are not three "eternals." Each Person is almighty; but there are not three "almighties." Each Person is God; but there are not three "gods." St. Athanasius wrote: "Such as the Father is, such is the Son, such is the Holy Ghost."

Many great theologians have tried over the centuries to come up with earthly analogies to help explain this miraculous, mysterious, and holy Doctrine of the church. And you have probably heard of some of them. Each is helpful, to a point. But each also falls woefully short:

(1) The analogy of the candle. The candle, which is one, is nevertheless experienced as THREE -- the Light, the Fire, and the Warmth.

(2) The analogy of the box. A box, which is one thing, is nevertheless experienced as THREE -- height, width, and depth.

(3) The analogy of a fountain. A fountain, which is one, is nevertheless experienced as THREE -- the fountain, the water, the movement or motion.

(4) The analogy of WATER. Water is one, but it can be either solid, liquid, or gaseous.

(5) The analogy of the shamrock (used by the great St. Patrick of Ireland). The shamrock has one leaf, but with THREE smaller leaves on it.

(6) But perhaps the greatest story from antiquity comes from the great St. Augustine, Bishop of Hippo, in the early Fifth Century AD. While walking along the beach, pondering the mystery of the Holy Trinity, he noticed a young boy with a small shovel and a pail. The little boy was digging a hole in the sand, and then scooping up water from the waves and pouring it in the little hole. **Over and over, the boy poured seawater into the hole. The great**

archbishop asked him what he was doing, and the little boy replied: "I am pouring the ocean into this hole." St. Augustine realized that that was precisely what HE was doing -- trying to pour the vastness of the doctrine of the Holy Trinity in the small hole of his mind.

5. Our Gospel lesson this morning, from John Chapter 16, contains the words of the Lord Jesus as they touch on the three Persons of the Holy Trinity. As we look at this passage, it is important to remember that the complete Doctrine of the Holy Trinity took four centuries, or more, to come together. The New Testament gives us clues as to the Triune nature of our God.

(1) Matthew Chapter 28:19-21: Jesus gives the Great Commission, in which the apostles are sent out to teach, preach, and baptize "in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." One God. Three persons.

(2) Matthew Chapter 3:16-17: At the baptism of Jesus, the Holy Spirit descends from heaven upon Jesus, in bodily form as a dove, and a voice from heaven (the Father) says, "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased."

(3) 2 Corinthians 13:13: St. Paul ends his letter with the Triune benediction: "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all."

(4) Galatians 4:4-6: St. Paul outlines the doctrine of the Trinity by saying that God the Father, at the right time, sent His Son Jesus, born of a human mother, to redeem those held captive by the law; and that to confirm the divine Son-ship of Jesus, the Father "sent the Holy Spirit into our hearts."

(5) And in our Gospel lesson this morning from John 16:12-15:

(a) Jesus explains to His disciples that He has still more things to tell them, but that He "cannot bear them now." So the Holy Spirit will be sent to them from heaven by God the Father to "guide you into all the truth."

(b) The Holy Spirit will reveal God's will, and God's purpose, to the disciples by giving glory and honor to Jesus. "He will take all that is mine and declare it to you," Jesus said.

(c) And then Jesus says this: "All that the Father has is mine, and it is for this reason that I said that He will take what is mine and declare it to you." ALL THAT THE FATHER HAS IS MINE. And the Spirit will declare it to you. GOD THE FATHER, GOD THE SON, GOD THE HOLY SPIRIT.

6. Now. What exactly does this mean for us today? The best way to answer that is to conclude with a short story: Years ago, when I was a young teenager (about the time I played basketball for Coach Baldock), I got to attend an ordination service of a deacon in a Baptist church in a small town. **The old pastor who led the service called the deacon forward, explained what was going to happen, and then asked ONE QUESTION: "Explain the Holy Trinity."** The young man thought for a moment and replied: "The Holy Trinity means that God is in charge of everything, and that He gave us His Son. He gave us His best."

God gave us His best. And He wants us to do the same. And even though this is risky for us, the rewards are literally out-of-this-world.