

**Scripture Reading: Galatians 4: “4 Now I say that the heir, as long as he is a child, does not differ at all from a slave, though he is master of all, 2 but is under guardians and stewards until the time appointed by the father. 3 Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world. 4 But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, 5 to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons. 6 And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying out, “Abba, Father!” 7 Therefore you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.”**

**II Corinthians 13: “11 Finally, brethren, farewell. Become complete. Be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace will be with you. 12 Greet one another with a holy kiss. 13 All the saints greet you. “14 The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, & the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen.”**

## **''A Trinitarian Offense''**

**This morning we begin ordinary or normal time in the Church calendar which will take us back to Advent as we discussed last week!**

- **We celebrate this first week as Trinity Sunday where we focus on what the Bible teaches us about the Nature of God!**

**As part of this celebration, after the sermon we will sing St. Patrick’s Breastplate and before communion we will recite the Athanasian Creed... While there is much to consider there, our theology should never be very far removed from the practical areas of our lives, and this is especially true with understanding of God’s Nature.**

**So, this morning I want us to consider three basic questions:**

- 1] How do we know about God’s Nature?**
- 2] What do we know about God’s Nature?**
- 3] How does God’s Nature impact our Christian lives?**

**So as we sing St. Patrick’s Breastplate and recite the Athanasian Creed we will see that there is a LOT to know and understand about God’s Nature, but we should always begin with that first basic question.**

- **How do we know about God’s Nature?**

**[That’s right] From the Bible which we must remember is God’s revelation to us. As Francis Schaeffer rightly titled the 3<sup>rd</sup> book in his trilogy, He is There and He is Not Silent!**

**Because God has spoken to us in His Word, we can know Truth about Who He is, and this stands in stark contrast with the modern view of god or truth.**

- **When we recite the Creed we are saying this is Who God tells us He is and that anyone that wants to be saved must believe this about God.**

**The modern man or woman will quickly say, well that is fine for you, but I may have a different view of just who or what God is, or they may think he or she does not even exist.**

- **And of course, we are VERY intolerant if we do not fully respect everyone’s “truth” about God.**

**At this point I like to take folks back to some basics that usually drive them crazy, but the Apostle Paul says that the truth of God will be foolishness to the world.**

I might ask, ‘so we each have our own view of God or what we think is true about Him, correct? When they say yes, my follow-up question is do you think two plus two equals four?

Is that true for everyone? What if I have a friend who wants two plus two to be five? Can he or she have their own truth about addition?

- This is where they get irritated and tell me in a snarky voice that math is different!

Really, I would say: So doing addition is something everyone must agree on but knowledge of the Creator Who spoke the orderly universe into being so that math is true, can be whatever “truth” any person wants it to be?

This is why we see the Apostle Paul presenting the Gospel the way he does on Mars Hill to the Greek scholars who were very similar to our modern friends interested in every new thing, but also relative when it came to the truth:

Acts 17:30 “Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent, 31 because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead.”

- So, people may argue that we can all have our own “truth” but as we saw last week, Jesus is the Lord of Lords and King of Kings.

So the next question for this morning is what do we know about God’s Nature?

- Well it turns out that we know a lot on one hand & very little on the other!

Now just what do I mean by that?

As I already pointed out, by the time that we sing the Breastplate and recite the creed we will be thinking WOW, that is a lot to know and understand!

But on the other hand, we should remember that we are speaking about the Eternal, Almighty God Who could speak all that we can see and know into being out of nothing! As we often point out, one of the exciting things about spending eternity in relation to God is that there will ALWAYS be much more to learn about Him!

- Understanding the Nature of God is not something we can learn in a creed or even take seminary classes about and then say, “Got it!” I know all that I need to know about God!

No, there are basics that we need to know, but from our human perspective God’s Nature is never something we can know exhaustively.

- With that said there are certainly Truths we must believe or else we will get everything else wrong:

Just like knowing two plus two equals four, there are basic truths about God’s Nature that we must know and understand. We must know this because it is True and because it will help us to not only live the Christian life,

- But also to share the truth of about God to others.

Every major heresy and cult at bottom fails to understand the Triune Nature of God revealed to us in the Bible. There are some very basic questions that we can ask about God’s nature that keep us on the right track...

They are truths revealed to us in the Bible and truths the Creeds cover in much more detail.

- First we should ask, if the Father is God?

Most would agree with that, but we should remember that He can often be seen as that grey-haired man in the sky which is very wrong.

- The next question that must be asked is whether the Son is God?

We give another hearty YES, based on the claims of Christ Himself and proclamations like John 1:1 where we are told that the Word is God. This is critical because Jesus is not a god as the Jehovah Witnesses would claim, or a separate son of god like the Mormons would teach.

- And then we also ask whether the Holy Spirit is God!

Here we remember Peter's bold statement to Ananias who lied to the Holy Spirit, saying he lied to God.

And of course, as we have covered in past years the Bible regards the Spirit as a person & not some force or power. Remembering these Three distinct Persons of the Godhead will keep us out of the many heresies that have haunted the Church down through the ages, like modalism or Arianism.

We must also remember that The Father is not the Son nor the Spirit,

That the Son is not the Father nor the Spirit and that the Spirit is not the Father nor the Son.

- This brings us to the final question to ask: Does the Bible reveal that there just One God?

As the Bible declares at Deuteronomy 6:4 "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one!"

The Bible reveals One God in Three Persons which we can see in the first chapter of Genesis with, "in the Beginning God & 'let US make man in OUR image.'"

Or again at the baptism of Jesus, where Matthew tells us that "16 When He had been baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened to Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting upon Him. 17 And suddenly a voice came from heaven, saying, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." *[heretics struggle at this point!]*

Now before I turn to our final question, I want to touch on the objection that will be raised about confusion or contradictions. These can come from skeptics, honest searchers or even our own covenant children!

Those answers to our questions are all pretty simple & straightforward when considered alone, but putting them all together is harder to grasp & many of the cults have built followings by saying, we can make things more simple!

- The secular skeptics will just say we are not being logical when speaking about Three Persons Being One God!
- Since we are told to be ready to give an answer for the faith within, we must be ready to address such honest questions or objections.

Sadly many address them with examples or analogies that are unhelpful and somethings just plain wrong [ask for some...]

As we would expect, C.S. Lewis comes as close as anyone I have read in presenting the right perspective. It sort of relates back to that math example only now with geometry.

[give Lewis's example]

- So again what we can know about God's Nature is True, but not exhaustive.

And this brings us to our final question: What impact should the Truth of the Trinity have in our lives.

Well, I would argue that the Breastplate which we will be singing shortly is a great example. Patrick had a heart for Ireland and faced overwhelming odds when spreading the Good News in that pagan land.

Tradition holds that they sang a version of this song as they walked the paths and roads in their work. It was as my sermon title implies a Trinitarian Offensive. We obviously have our own battles to wage today and we should learn from Patrick *[who might chuckle at some of what we think are major problems]*. As we read and study our Scriptures, we should be constantly learning more and more about how the Persons of the Godhead work in our lives and the world around us.

This is why I selected the text from Galatians as an example of how the Apostle Paul wants us to be on offense because of what the Persons of the Godhead have done for us! He began by reminding them of who they are in the flow of God's history... "4 Now I say that the heir, as long as he is a child, does not differ at all from a slave, though he is master of all, 2 but is under guardians and stewards until the time appointed by the father. 3 Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world. 4 But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, 5 to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons. 6 And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying out, "Abba, Father!" 7 Therefore you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ."

➤ Did you notice how the Father sent forth the Son and the Spirit?

I referred to one of the books by Francis Schaeffer, who often spoke about the involvement of all the Persons of the Trinity in our Sanctification which is why our other morning text is from II Corinthians 13. A text which may be so familiar that we often can read or hear it without giving much thought to the profound truths it reveals especially at verse 14...

"The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, & the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen." This is often used as a benediction and when it is, it should truly bless us!

Dr. Schaeffer would use this verse to stress how our new birth puts us in a new relationship with all Three Persons of the Trinity and that a "our relationship is never mechanical and not primarily legal" *[which is a dangerous thing to say in some reformed circles!]*

Of course he goes on to explain what he means by saying, "It is personal and vital. God the Father is my Father and thus I am united and identified with God the Son; and God the Holy Spirit dwells within me.

The Bible tells us that this three-fold relationship is a present fact, just as it tells us that justification and Heaven are facts." In other words, Dr. Schaeffer is saying that just as we as Christians can know that our sins are forgiven because of the work of Jesus in history & just as we can know that we will spend eternity with Jesus because of His work...

➤ We must also know that we have REAL life with Him, our Triune God, in our everyday lives.

As Paul tells us with this powerful benediction, we have the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God [the Father], & the communion of the Holy Spirit with us in the here and now!

➤ The Persons of the Godhead are with us on our good days AND our bad days!

➤ They are with us in our times of joy and our times of sorrow!

➤ They are with us in the big things AND they are with us in the small things.

If we are honest with ourselves, we know that we are better at trusting God in the big things than we are with the small stuff... *[great prayer v. saying grace]*

However, it is the habit of thinking we can handle this or that little thing that often causes us to forget God over time.

➤ Clearly we see in this benediction the Persons of the Godhead here giving us Grace and love and communion!

And what does it mean for our lives? Well , the result of believing what the Apostle states here comes in the verses just prior as Paul was bidding them farewell...

11b “Become complete.” How can we be complete without the work of God?

- It should ALWAYS remind us that we add nothing to the work of God!

“Be of good comfort,” Good comfort comes when we are content, knowing that we are in fellowship with our Triune God and always just where He wants us to be!

“be of one mind,” The major consequence of the fall was separation or death: Man was separated from God, from his wife, from the creation and even from himself both in life and in death!

To be of one mind means unity or the opposite of those separations...

So we should rejoice that the Persons of the Godhead have restored our relationship with them, our relationship with other people can be restored and our relationship with creation is being restored with the coming of the new heavens & new earth!

“live in peace;” which means that every time we get upset with ourselves or our parents or our husband or wife, or a brother or sister in Christ or even our neighbors and even God...

- We are to remember that we serve the God of peace and that the work of all the Persons of the Godhead have restored that peace!

Which is why Paul can then confidently say, “ and the God of love and peace will be with you.”

We have considered three important questions this morning:

- 1] How do we know about God’s Nature? We can know God because He revealed Himself to us.
- 2] What do we know about God’s Triune Nature? We know a LOT, but can never know everything!
- 3] How does God’s Triune Nature impact our Christian lives? Much in every way!

So having reflected on the work of each Person of the Godhead on this Trinity Sunday and staring down the corridor of Ordinary time in this second half of the Year of our Lord, 2021, let us be those who rejoice as we see all the Persons of the Godhead working in our lives and the lives as others...

Remembering that Jesus said, if you love me keep my commands,

- But also, remembering that His yoke is easy and His burden is light because it is God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit, doing His work in us!

Communion Meditation: Luke 15:20

“17 Jesus spoke these words, lifted up His eyes to heaven, and said: “Father, the hour has come. Glorify Your Son, that Your Son also may glorify You, <sup>2</sup>as You have given Him authority over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as You have given Him.

And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.”