

SERMON NOTES FOR HOLY TRINITY SUNDAY ♦ 06·19·11

The doctrine of the Trinity in its simplest form: **There is one God, who exists in three persons (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) and each person is equal in deity or status as God with the others. So the Father is God, the Son is God, the Spirit is God, and yet they are not three gods, but one God.**

The doctrine does not involve a contradiction.

What the Doctrine Is and Why It Matters

Where We Begin in Describing God

1. We are dependent on God to reveal himself for our knowledge of God and for the proper ways of talking about him.
2. Scripture is the primary source where God reveals himself to us and the highest authority for our talk about God.
3. Even with Scripture, we are limited in our ability to understand God. There's much we don't know, but we know enough to trust him and worship him.

How Scripture Uses Language to Describe God

1. Sometimes Scripture uses analogy to describe God (e.g. “the eyes of the Lord...” [Deuteronomy 11:12] and “the hand of God” [2 Chronicles 30:12]). Note: though it is analogy, it still communicates truth.
2. Sometimes Scripture describes God by saying what he is not (e.g., “unchanging” [Micah 7:20]; “infinite” [Psalm 147:5]).
3. Sometimes Scripture describes God in literal ways. The trinity is one such literal statement.

Why the Doctrine of the Trinity Matters

1. *The doctrine of the Trinity is the doctrine of who God really is in his essence.* If we are to worship the right God, we must worship God as he really is: triune. Anything else is worshipping a false god.
2. *The doctrine of the Trinity helps us define the Christian faith.* It forms a large part of our confessional identity as Christians. It is the one doctrine above all else that the Christian church has agreed on. This means that it is a good beginning test for cutting through the confusion of which groups are truly Christian and which are not.
3. *Salvation can only be accomplished for us because God is a trinity.* If Jesus was just a man, he couldn't have saved us. He would at best have been a perfect man who wouldn't need salvation for himself. But He couldn't have taken our place. This is something only someone fully God and fully man can do. To accomplish salvation for us, he had to be both God and man.

Law and Gospel

The law: we must speak and confess rightly about God as a trinity.

The gospel: God doesn't just hold us to a standard. He meets the demand for right Christian doctrine by giving us a revelation of himself and by giving us faith to believe it. Unless he does this we can never confess the Christian faith.

Knowing that proper confession of faith is a gift of God should lead to humility.