

Pastor Brian's  
Midweek Message  
June 8, 2022

**"THREE IN ONE"**

*Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. (Matthew 28:11)*

This coming Sunday



we focus on and celebrate the truth of our namesake, the Holy Trinity...it's Holy Trinity Sunday.

This is the name that was chosen by our founding members as it describes the God that we worship, the God that created us and gives us life, the God that redeems us from eternal separation from himself, and the God who empowers our faith and Christian life. We have ONE God who manifests himself in THREE persons. This is perhaps the greatest of all mysteries of the faith.

In the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> centuries, as the Church was coming out of the shadows of being outlawed by the Roman Empire into the daylight of tolerance and even as the official religion of the Empire, various heresies were appearing from within. At that time the greatest threat to the Scriptural understanding of who God is emerged mostly out of the teachings of a bishop in Alexandria named Arius. The "Arian Heresy" basically is described as a belief that Christ is not the eternal Son of God, and coequal with God, but the first and greatest of God's created beings. In 325AD a council of the entire Church was called by Emperor Constantine and convened in Nicaea, which is located in what's now northwestern Turkey, to deal chiefly with this issue. The Council of Nicaea refuted the Arian teaching, mainly by way of the leadership and teaching of another bishop named Athanasius (also of Alexandria) and produced what would become known as the Nicene Creed as a statement of faith that clearly defines the three persons of the Trinity; Father, Son, and Holy Spirit as to who they are and their role within the Godhead.

The Arian Heresy didn't go away though as it remained widespread in the Church into the 5<sup>th</sup> century, when another council, the Council of Chalcedon of 451 was convened under Emperor Marcian. From this council emerged the Athanasian Creed (named for Athanasius but not written by Him as he died in 373AD). This creed, which we will be confessing this Sunday, meticulously sets forth the Trinitarian teachings of the Church and is included in the Three Ecumenical Creeds adopted by the Lutheran Church and included in our confessions, the Book of Concord of 1580. Not understanding the reasons why these creeds were developed and put into use will lead one to wonder why they're needed and why we would ever use them in worship.

Ultimately God is a unity of three distinct persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The essence of this reality is impossible for us to fully comprehend. I like to use the imagery of our Federal Government here in the United States. It was formed on the basis of our Trinitarian God. We can use God to help understand our structure of government. We must certainly not attempt to turn that around and try to understand God through the structure of the government. So, I ask...how many Federal Governments do we have? That's simple...just one! Within that one government are three branches, each with clearly defined constitutional duties and powers. There is the Executive branch, the Legislative branch, and the Judicial branch. Is the Executive branch the Federal Government? Yes. Is the Legislative branch the Federal Government? Yes. Is the Judicial branch the Federal Government? Yes. So, are there then THREE Federal Governments? No, just ONE! There is a unity of three distinct branches that make up our government.

An understanding of the essence and attributes of our God is vitally important, so that we can be sure that we are worshiping and trusting the true God and not inventing a god of our own creation, which is no god at all.