

Worshipping the Trinity
Luke 3:1-6, 15-22, 9:28-36
Sermon Outline

Introduction: What is ultimately real? Some say matter/energy, with distressing implications for us.

I) Ultimate Reality according to Scripture: The Trinity

“God is one in his essential being, but...in this being there are three Persons, yet so as not to form separate and distinct individuals...Each Person is self-conscious and self-directing, yet never acting independently or in opposition” (New Bible Dictionary, p. 1300)

II) The Trinity makes sense of love

A) Our obsession with love and relationships

Why the obsession?

You are my beloved Son with whom I am well pleased
More than a commissioning to the Messiahship

B) What the salvation story reveals

Ancient Trinitarian love on display for our good.

1) Why the incarnation, baptism, and cross?

Hebrews 10.5-6: ...Behold, I have come to do your will, O God

The good Son zealous to clear his Father's name

2) Why the dove rather than fire at Jesus' baptism?

3) Why did the Spirit fall at the Father's bidding?

C) Meaning

III) The Trinity shows us how to love each other

A) Submit voluntarily

B) Obsess over each other's honor

Conclusion: It's not about us

Questions for Reflection this Week

- 1) Respond to the following statement made by physicist and Nobel Laureate Steven Weinberg: “It is almost irresistible for humans to believe that we have some special relation to the universe, that human life is not just a more-or-less farcical outcome of a chain of accidents reaching back to the first three minutes, but we are somehow built from the beginning...It is very hard to realize that this all is just a tiny part of an overwhelmingly hostile universe. It is even harder to realize that this present universe has evolved from an unspeakably unfamiliar early condition, and faces a future extinction of endless cold or intolerable heat. The more the universe seems comprehensible, the more it also seems pointless.” (*The First Three Minutes*, quoted from *Oracles of Science: Celebrity Scientists versus God and Religion*, Karl Giberson and Mariano Artigas)
- 2) The doctrine of the Trinity distinguishes Christianity from the other great monotheistic religions (Judaism and Islam). The Westminster Confession of Faith, Chapter 2.3, describes the Trinity as follows: “In the unity of the Godhead there are three persons, of one substance, power, and eternity: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit: the Father is of none, neither begotten, nor proceeding; the Son is eternally begotten of the Father; the Holy Spirit eternally proceeding from the Father and the Son.” Discuss or jot down questions you have about the Trinity. Is it important for Christians to believe in the Trinity? Why? Why not? Why should we believe in the Trinity if the word “Trinity” does not appear in the Bible anywhere?
- 3) Respond to the following statement: “The reality of the Trinity helps us understand why our minds so easily move back and forth between unity and diversity in the way in which we order and relate to reality. A particular tree, for example, is a unique thing, different in a whole range of particulars from every other tree on the planet. And yet we still call it “a tree”—that is, we treat it as something that belongs to a single and unified class of things that we call “trees.” Why do we do the unity in diversity thing so easily and naturally? It is because we are made in the image of the Triune God—He has stamped into the structure of our minds his own being.”
- 4) Document the ways in which the gospel story is not simply a story of what God has done for us, but more deeply a revelation of the love that exists among the members of the Trinity. You may find the hymn “John Seventeen” printed in the bulletin to be of some help.
- 5) Reflect on the following: “To know that deepest reality is Trinitarian means that all our quests for relational satisfaction, as difficult and frustrating as they may be, are justified and worth the effort. It means that when our hearts break over relationships that fail, our hearts are doing the right thing—they are rightly responding to something that is at odds with deepest Reality. It means that every act of kindness, even if it is small or resisted or ignored, counts and is noted by the Persons who dwell in reality’s deepest place.”
- 6) Jesus submitted to his Father, as the Spirit does to the Father and the Son, but the Son and the Spirit do so voluntarily, as equals. What difficulties do you have with submitting—and how can the manner of Trinitarian submitting help you.
- 7) Every member of the Trinity lives for the honor of every other. This reality lies behind Paul’s command in Romans 12 that we should “outdo one another in showing honor for each other.” How have you been stingy in giving away honor and what steps will you make to be more like the Godhead in the way in which you relate to people?