

Worship Service

Trinity Sunday – May 30, 2021

St. Christopher-by-the-Sea

Gibson Island, Maryland

Introduction – The Rev. Charles Rowins

Hymn 362, stanzas 1 and 4

Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty

Minister: Blessed by God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit

People: *And blessed be his kingdom, now and for ever. Amen.*

Minister: Almighty God, to you all hearts are open, all desires known, and from you no secrets are hid: Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you, and worthily magnify your holy Name; through Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

Song of Praise

Glory to God in the highest, and peace to his people on earth.

*Lord God, heavenly King, almighty God and Father, we worship you,
we give you thanks, we praise you for your glory.*

*Lord Jesus Christ, only Son of the Father, Lord God, Lamb of God,
you take away the sin of the world: have mercy on us;*

you are seated at the right hand of the Father: receive our prayer.

For you alone are the Holy One, you alone are the Lord,

you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit,

in the glory of God the Father. Amen.

Collect for Trinity Sunday

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Let us pray.

Almighty and everlasting God, you have given to us your servants grace, by the confession of a true faith, to acknowledge the glory of the eternal Trinity, and in the power of your divine Majesty to worship the Unity: Keep us steadfast in this faith and worship, and bring us at last to see you in your one and eternal glory, O Father; who with the son and the Holy Spirit live and reign, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

First Reading: Isaiah 6:1-8 – see lesson insert

Psalm 29 – see lesson insert

Second Reading: Romans 8:12-17 – see lesson insert

Gospel: John 3:1-17 – see lesson insert

Sermon – The Rev. Charles Rowins

The Nicene Creed

We believe in one God,
the Father, the Almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all that is, seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,
the only Son of God,
eternally begotten of the Father,
God from God, Light from Light,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made,
of one being with the Father.
Through him all things were made.
For us and for our salvation
he came down from heaven:
by the power of the Holy Spirit
he became incarnate from the Virgin Mary,

and was made man.

For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;

he suffered death and was buried.

On the third day he rose again

in accordance with the Scriptures;

he ascended into heaven

and is seated at the right hand of the Father.

He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead,

and his kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life,

who proceeds from the Father and the Son.

With the Father and the Son he is worshiped and glorified.

He has spoken through the Prophets.

We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church.

We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.

We look for the resurrection of the dead,

and the life of the world to come. Amen.

Prayers of the People

Father, we pray for your holy Catholic Church;

That we all may be one.

Grant that every member of the Church may truly and humbly serve you;

That your Name may be glorified by all people.

We pray for all bishops, priests, and deacons;

That they may be faithful ministers of your Word and Sacraments.

We pray for all who govern and hold authority in the nations of the world;

That there may be justice and peace on the earth.

Give us grace to do your will in all that we undertake;

That our works may find favor in your sight.

Have compassion on those who suffer from any grief or trouble;

That they may be delivered from their distress.

Give to the departed eternal rest;

Let light perpetual shine upon them.

We praise you for your saints who have entered into joy;

May we also come to share in your heavenly kingdom.

Let us pray for our own needs and those of others.

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Lord, hear the prayers of your people; and what we have asked faithfully, grant that we may obtain effectually, to the glory of your Name; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

Confession

Most merciful God,

We confess that we have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed,
by what we have done, and by what we have left undone.

We have not loved you with our whole heart;

we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves.

We are truly sorry and we humbly repent.

For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ, have mercy on us and forgive us;

that we may delight in your will, and walk in your ways,

to the glory of your Name. *Amen.*

Absolution

Almighty God have mercy on you, forgive you all your sins through our Lord Jesus Christ, strengthen you in all goodness, and by the power of the Holy Spirit keep you in eternal life. *Amen.*

Announcements and *America*

My country, 'tis of thee, sweet land of liberty, of thee I sing;

Long may our land be bright with freedom's holy light;

Protect us by thy might, great God, our King.

Prayer of St. Chrysostom

Almighty God, who hast given us grace at this time with one accord to make our common supplication unto thee, and has promised through thy well-beloved Son that when two or three are gathered together in his Name thou wilt be in the midst of them: Fulfill now, O Lord, the desires and petitions of thy servants as may be best for us; granting us in this world knowledge of thy truth, and in the world to come life everlasting. *Amen.*

Hymn 579, stanzas 1-4

Almighty Father, strong to save

Dismissal

Alleluia! Alleluia! Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

Thanks be to God. Alleluia! Alleluia!

**Sermon preached by The Rev. Charles Rowins at St. Christopher-by-the-Sea,
Gibson Island, Maryland, Trinity Sunday, May 30, 2021.**

One of my favorite characters in the Bible is the Pharisee Nicodemus, who is featured in today's Gospel (**John 3:1-17**). The Pharisees were "letter of the law" people. Given this "strict observance" nature, the conversation between Nicodemus and Jesus is really interesting.

Note that Nicodemus "came to Jesus by night." He initiated the conversation. He was curious. Who was this fellow Jesus? There was something about him that Nicodemus needed to understand. "Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God; for no one can do these signs that you do apart from the presence of God."

The two exchange thoughts. Jesus says, "So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit." To which, Nicodemus says, "How can these things be?"

Why do we like Nicodemus? Because he speaks for us. You and I spend hours, weeks, years, maybe a lifetime asking this question: "How can these things be?"

"Why is it that that I, as a single creature, have a sense, a strong sense, that I am somehow related to the Creator of all that was, is, and will be?" "How do I fit? Why do I feel loved? Why would the Creator of the Universe be at all interested in little old me?"

Yes, indeed, "How can these things be?"

Some people, of course, answer their own question: “We don’t know. We never will know. So, spending time wondering about it all isn’t worth the effort.”

We’ve probably been there. But, you know what else? We’re here, which suggests that we haven’t really stopped asking the question. There is something that suggests to us that at least we should pursue. Maybe, just maybe, one of these days, there’ll be a breakthrough, and we’ll understand.

We like Nicodemus because Nicodemus speaks for us.

We also like Nicodemus because when Jesus answers Nicodemus, we sense that Jesus is answering us. “Very truly, I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above.” In other words, the answer to our question is not something that we will invent, but someone whom we will receive.

The verb “to receive” just happens to be of interest to St. Paul. In his letter to the early Christians in Rome (**Romans 8:12-17**), Paul says, “For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received a spirit of adoption.” God has not left us hanging. God has rescued us from our uncertainty and named us His children and therefore His heirs.”

We are not alone. In Christ we are with the Creator. If we had trouble speaking to God before, we don’t have that trouble any more. The answers to our questions are found in this man Jesus.

As you and I know from our own Nicodemus-like conversations, we have to work at the answers. And sometimes we feel like the prophet Isaiah (**Isaiah 6:1-8**):

“Woe is me! I am lost, for I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips.”

But, like Isaiah, we keep plugging: “Yet my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts!” We come through the struggle with even greater faith. It’s as if today’s Psalm (**Psalm 29**) is our Psalm: “The Lord shall give strength to his people; the Lord shall give his people the blessing of peace.”

This peace is captured beautifully in John’s Gospel: “For God so loved the world that he gave his only son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life. Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.”

We remember this passage of Scripture not because it is drilled into us, but because it speaks to us. I am certain that when we first heard this sentiment, our ears perked up. “Say what?” “For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish, but may have eternal life.”

Yes, we perked up. And we’re still perking. We continue to ask the tough questions, but we do so now with a faith that has been tested and proven helpful. Not by luck, not by our hard work, but by the Love of God in Christ Jesus.

But, for this experience to take hold, we have to give God something to work with. We have to go to Jesus by night or by day and say, “Tell me again, Lord, how can these things be?”

And often the reinforcement of our faith comes not from private conversations, but from engaging others who are seeking the same reinforcement. There is private prayer, but also corporate prayer.

One of the many things you and I have in common is that we are still perking. We are still asking. We are still growing. We are still planting seeds – sometimes by ourselves and sometimes with others – and still harvesting. And always with God by our side. God plants, God waters, God nourishes. And God heals, even when we forget to nourish. In short, God saves us in order that we might not only refresh our salvation experience, but share that experience.

This notion of “still perking” and “still asking” and “still growing” and “still sharing” suggests that our Faith is dynamic. Our conviction is not “one and done.” No, there’s an “again” element to our Faith, what some call “being born again.” Indeed, Nicodemus asks Jesus, “Can one enter a second time into the mother’s womb and be born?” Jesus explains that he is not talking about a physical rebirth, but a spiritual rebirth. “You must be born from above.”

In other words, we are not reborn in the Spirit apart from God, but in thanksgiving to God for Christ. “From above.” The Creator of the Universe coming to us in a form that we can understand. God Incarnate. God in human flesh. God who goes beyond birth and death, which we all experience, to a new life, a new dimension, sustained by God the Holy Spirit.

In his own way, Nicodemus was asking, “What more do I need to do?” The answer Jesus gave and the answer that the Risen Christ gives is simply “Accept what our Father has done for you. You are saved. You don’t have to earn it. Just say and mean ‘Thank you, Lord.’”

If you and I can do that, our lives will be for the better. Our presence today suggests that we believe just that. It feels like being born again. We're not earning this new life. God has done that for us. Nicodemus, bless his heart, was on the right track to ask "how can these things be." It's a first step in a great journey. Amen.

Lessons for Trinity Sunday – May 30, 2021

Collect: Almighty and everlasting God, you have given to us your servants grace, by the confession of a true faith, to acknowledge the glory of the eternal Trinity, and in the power of your divine Majesty to worship the Unity: Keep us steadfast in this faith and worship, and bring us at last to see you in your one and eternal glory, O Father; who with the Son and the Holy spirit live and reign, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

First Reading: Isaiah 6:1-8

In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lofty; and the hem of his robe filled the temple. Seraphs were in attendance above him; each had six wings: with two they covered their faces, and with two they covered their feet, and with two they flew. And one called to another and said: "Holly, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory." The pivots on the thresholds shook at the voices of those who called, and the house filled with smoke. And I said: "Woe is me! I am lost, for I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips; yet my eyes have seen the king, the Lord of hosts!" Then one of the seraphs flew to me, holding a live coal that had been taken from the altar with a pair of tongs. The seraph touched my mouth with it and said: "Now that this has touched your lips, your guilt has departed and your sin is blotted out." Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us!" And I said, "Here am I; send me!"

The Word of the Lord. *Thanks be to God.*

Psalm 29

Ascribe to the Lord, you gods,

ascribe to the Lord glory and strength.

Ascribe to the Lord the glory due his Name;

worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness.

The voice of the Lord is upon the waters; the God of glory thunders;

the Lord is upon the mighty waters.

The voice of the Lord is a powerful voice;

the voice of the Lord is a voice of splendor.

The voice of the Lord breaks the cedar trees;

the Lord breaks the cedars of Lebanon;

He makes Lebanon skip like a calf,

and Mount Hermon like a young wild ox.

The voice of the Lord splits the flames of fire; the voice of the Lord shakes the wilderness;

the Lord shakes the wilderness of Kadesh.

The voice of the Lord makes the oak trees, writhe

and strips the forests bare.

And in the temple of the Lord

all are crying, "Glory!"

The Lord sits enthroned above the flood;

the Lord sits enthroned as a King for evermore.

The Lord shall give strength to his people;

the Lord shall give his people the blessing of peace.

Second Reading: Romans 8:12-17

So then brothers and sisters, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh – for if you live according to the flesh, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God. For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received a spirit of adoption. When we cry, “Abba! Father!” it is that very Spirit bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ – if, in fact, we suffer with him so that we may also be glorified with him.

The Word of the Lord. *Thanks be to God.*

Gospel: John 3:1-17

Now there was a Pharisee named Nicodemus, a leader of the Jews. He came to Jesus by night and said to him, “Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God; for no one can do these signs that you do apart from the presence of God.” Jesus answered him, “Very truly, I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above.” Nicodemus said to him, “How can anyone be born after having grown old? Can one enter a second time into the mother’s womb and be born?” Jesus answered, “Very truly, I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit. What is born of the flesh is flesh, and what is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not be astonished that I said to you, ‘You must be born from above.’ The wind blows where it chooses, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit. Nicodemus said to him ‘How can these things be?’” Jesus answered him, “Are you a teacher of Israel, and yet you do not understand these things? Very truly, I tell you we speak of what we know and testify to what we have seen; yet you do not receive our testimony. If I have told you about earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you about heavenly things? No one has ascended into heaven except the one who descended from heaven, the Son of Man. And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life. For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life. Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.”

The Word of the Lord. *Thanks be to God.*

Hymns for Trinity Sunday – May 30, 2021

Hymn 362, stanzas 1 and 4

Holy, holy, holy!

Holy, holy, holy! Lord God Almighty!

Early in the morning our song shall rise to thee:

Holy, holy, holy! Merciful and mighty, God in three Persons, blessed Trinity.

Holy, holy, holy! Lord God Almighty!

All thy works shall praise thy Name, in earth, and sky, and sea;

Holy, holy, holy! Merciful and mighty, God in three Persons, blessed Trinity.

Hymn 366, stanzas 1 and 4

Holy God, we praise thy Name

Holy God we praise thy Name, Lord of all, we bow before thee;

All on earth thy scepter claim, all in heaven above adore thee;

Infinite thy vast domain, everlasting is thy reign.

Holy Father, holy Son, Holy Spirit, Three we name thee,

while in essence only One, undivided god we claim thee;

then, adoring, bend the knee and confess the mystery.

Hymn 579, stanzas 1-4

Almighty Father, strong to save

Almighty Father, strong to save, whose arm hath bound the restless wave,
who bidd'st the mighty ocean deep its own appointed limits keep:
O hear us when we cry to thee for those in peril on the sea.

O Christ, the Lord of hill and plain o'er which our traffic runs amain
by mountain pass or valley low; wherever Lord, thy people go,
protect them by thy guarding hand from every peril on the land.

O Spirit, whom the Father sent to spread abroad the firmament,;
O Wind of heaven, by thy might save all who dare the eagle's flight,
And keep them by thy watchful care from every peril in the air.

O Trinity of love and power, our people shield in danger's hour;
from rock and tempest, fire and foe, protect them wheresoe'er they go;
thus evermore shall rise to thee glad praise from space, air, land, and sea.