

Week 1
Faith in the Holy Trinity

Sermon Title:

A Sending and Sharing Community

Scripture Focus: - John 16:5-16

Key verse, John 16:15 - *All that belongs to the Father is mine. That is why I said the Spirit will take from what is mine and make it known to you.*

Sermon Introduction:

You may want to begin with a story about how you resemble or bear the likeness of one of your family members.

We are called to bear the likeness of the God who said, “Let *us* (meaning “Trinity”) make man in our image, in our likeness” (Gen. 1:26). When God created humanity he clearly had in mind that we would reflect His nature, His “likeness”, to the rest of the world. In order for us to portray God’s likeness through our lives we must explore and reflect upon the nature of God as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Then, we need to have the courage to honestly answer the question, is my life and my church community really a reflection of the Godhead three in one?

Sermon Content:

[READ THE TEXT – JOHN 16:5-16]

1. The sending and sharing nature of the Trinity *To us* (v. 5-7, 14-15)

- a. Jesus describes the sending and sharing nature of Father, Son and Holy Spirit in this passage. In verses 5-7 Jesus says that the Father has sent the Son who will send the Spirit to disciples. God is a sending God, a God on the move who does not stay in a holy huddle but actually moves in and amongst the world He created and loves. And we humans benefit from His self-extension toward us. One of the marks of the Trinity, then, is that of sending.
- b. God is not only a sending God, but a sharing God. He is a God who not only *goes out* but who also *gives out*. He doesn’t come to your heart empty-handed, he brings house warming gifts. In verses 14-15, Jesus says that the Father shares with the Son who shares with the Spirit who shares with disciples. The Trinity shares among each other in a way that extends to us. The mutual love within the Trinity does not turn Father, Son and Spirit inward creating an unhealthy clique but outward to the cosmos and, primarily, His human creation. God’s love is not centripetal but centrifugal; He comes out to where we are to invite us into Himself. Simply put, God invites human beings into Trinitarian love and purpose if we dare to enter in.
- c. Illustrate how God’s nature as a sending and sharing God has impacted you or someone you know. How has God come to you or shared with you or someone you know?

2. The sending and sharing nature of the Trinity *Through us*

- a. Our lives, relationships and mission should be shaped by and reflect the Trinity. The sending and sharing nature of God *to us* must pass *through us* as a benefit to the world. In

the same way that Abraham of the Old Testament was blessed so that “all peoples on the earth will be blessed through [him]” (Gen. 12:3b), those caught up in Trinitarian love are called to go and give what we have received from the sending and sharing God. We are called as the church to embody the sending and sharing nature of the Trinity not by staying in a holy huddle but by moving out further and further into the world to benefit the people of our world. A truly Trinitarian church is one in which the disciples love people and God so intensely that it pushes them not inward but outward toward the ends of the earth in the name God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Sermon Application:

Where is the sending God calling you? The Father sends the Son who sends the Spirit who sends the Church into the World. **Go** to some location or to some person God is calling you to in order to reflect Trinitarian love.

What is the sharing God calling you to give? The Father shares with the Son who shares with the Spirit who shares with the Church who shares with the World. **Give** generously of something you have to someone who needs what you have in order to reflect Trinitarian love.

Conclusion:

The sending and sharing Trinitarian God has established the Church to be a going and giving community. A truly Trinitarian church refuses to withdraw or hoard. God is calling us to go and give. Will we? “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!’” (Is. 6:8).

Recite with the congregation the Apostle’s Creed, the church’s historic statement of faith in the Trinity.

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Week 2 – The Father



Sermon Title:

The Accessible Generous Father

Scripture Focus: - Matthew 7:7-12

Key verse, Matthew 7:11b *“How much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him!”*

Sermon Introduction:

Share about a person you know who always seems to be accessible and/or generous with their time and/or other resources.

God the Father is like that. A popular view concerning Father God is that He is the wrathful and inaccessible deity within the Trinity. But the passage of Scripture we’ll focus on today challenges this misconception.

Sermon Content:

[READ THE TEXT – MATTHEW 7:7-12]

1. The Accessibility of Our Heavenly Father (v. 7-8)

In verses 7-8 Jesus is building a case for the accessibility of the Father. Although the Father is transcendentally above and beyond us, He is immanently among and beside us. Although the Father is altogether greater by far than anything He created, He is accessible and available to interact with His creation. Many people think God is aloof, far removed from the pain and plight of the human condition, but this could not be further from the truth revealed in the Bible. There we read that God “is not far from each one of us” (Acts 17:27). The Father who gave us Eden, who gave us His Son, and who gives us Himself in so many ways is quite willing to give good gifts to those who ask, seek, and knock.

2. The Extravagant Generosity of Our Heavenly Father (v. 9-11)

Jesus not only highlights the accessibility of the Father, He highlights the extravagant generosity of the Father. The divine irony of this passage is that Jesus, the one telling the people that the Father wants to give good gifts to His children, is Himself the greatest gift given by God the generous Father to His children. The extravagant generosity of God is Jesus the Son. The Jewish people of Jesus’ day were asking for liberation, freedom, hope, and restoration, but instead of giving them the political, temporal freedom they thought they needed (i.e., a stone or a snake), God goes one better and gives them eternal, ultimate freedom from sin, death, and lifeless living. One popular misconception is that the Father is the wrathful side of God and the Son is the loving side of God. However, if it were not for the love of the Father we would not have the Son.

3. The Way to Make Our Heavenly Father Proud (v. 12)

This passage about the nature of the Father ends with a challenge to treat people well. The Father is pleased when His children do to others as we would have them do to us. We cannot pay the Father back for His kindness to us, but He wants us to pay His kindness forward to others.

Sermon Application:

We have a heavenly Father we can be extremely proud of. Are we making our Father proud of us by doing to others as we would have them do to us? The Father saw our human need and gave to us what we needed most and He calls us to put ourselves in the shoes of others and do for them what they need the most. What can you do this week to pay the extravagant generosity of the Father forward to someone in need? Who in your life is waiting for you, dying for you, to do unto them as you would have them do unto you? Now, to borrow from Nike, *Just do it!*

Conclusion:

I want to give us a chance to get beyond our misconception of God as an angry, aloof, and inaccessible Father and see Him as the accessible generous Father He truly is and wants to be in our lives. Let's spend a few minutes asking, seeking, and knocking, making our requests known to our heavenly Father. We may not get exactly what we ask from the Father, but we will get what we need more than anything- we will get Him.

Find a creative way to invite people to prayerfully ask from God what they need the most. Perhaps people can also be invited to submit their special need anonymously in some kind of prayer box with the promise that the pastoral staff, board, or prayer team will pray for these requests.

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Week 3 – The Son of God



Sermon Title:

The Identity of the Son of God

Scripture Focus: - John 1:1-14

Key verse, John 1:14a - *The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us.*

Sermon Introduction:

Share about a time when you mistook a person for someone else or when someone mistook you for another person.

Throughout the 2000 years since Jesus Christ walked the earth He has been misidentified; mistaken for someone else. Some claim that He was just a good teacher, nothing more. Others claim He was a magic healer, that's it. Some have claimed that Jesus is fully human but not divine. Others have claimed He is fully divine but not human. Not many, but a few have asserted that Jesus Christ never even existed.

John, the apostle who spent three years of his life with Jesus, begins his Gospel tackling the question of Jesus' identity.

Sermon Content:

[READ THE TEXT – JOHN 1:1-14]

1. The Son of God is Divine

- a. The Son of God (Word) is Pre-Existent: John starts his Gospel with “In the beginning was the Word” (v. 1). He sets the record straight about Jesus’ ultimate identity as the Pre-Existent Son of God who was always with God the Father. John uses the very same phrase “in the beginning” that is used to begin the book of Genesis as a way of proclaiming that before the world began, the Son of God who became incarnate in Jesus Christ was.
- b. The Son of God (Word) is God: Not only was the Son of God with God in the beginning, but according to John, the Son “was God” (v. 1). Jesus is not just a profound prophet, wise teacher, or good guy- He is the divine Son of God in the flesh. He is fully God. Proclaiming that Jesus Christ is anything less than divine is missing the mark on who He is and insulting Him.
- c. The Son of God (Word) is Co-Creator: We often think of God the Father as the sole creator of the universe. However, in verse 3 John notes about the Son, “through him all things were made.” The Son, and even the Spirit (see Genesis 1:2), had a vital role with the Father in the creation of the cosmos.

Transition: We usually save the punch-line for the end of the story, but John begins his Gospel with the punch line- Jesus is the Son of God who is God. Then, in the rest of the Gospel, John sets out to support his claim theologically and historically. Claiming that Jesus Christ is anything less than God diminishes His deity.

2. The Son of God became Human

- a. The Son of God “became flesh and made his dwelling among us” (v. 14). John is saying that the fully divine Son of God at a moment in real historical time became fully human in Jesus Christ of Nazareth. Imagine leaving behind your divine privileges and powers in order to become one with your human creation. Imagine demoting yourself to a low level job in order to give higher status to those at that level. Athanasius, the early church theologian, put it this way, “Jesus became what we are to make us what He is.” This is not say Jesus became human to make us divine, but He did become one of us and one with us to make us sons and daughters of the Father. The divine Son of God took upon Himself all of the pain, heartache, angst, and struggle of humanity in order to redeem and restore humanity to its divinely designed status as sons and daughters of God.

Sermon Application:

There are only two possible responses to the Divine-Human Son of God

Rejection: There were and are those who will not recognize and receive Jesus as the divine human Son of God (v. 10-11).

Reception: There were and are those who recognize and receive Jesus as the divine human Son of God, and therefore, become children of God (v. 12-13).

Are you among those who reject or those who receive Jesus Christ as the Divine-Human Son of God incarnate? (Give a creative invitation for people to receive Christ and become sons and daughters of the Father. Perhaps people can put their name on a cross in your sanctuary. You may also want to connect the invitation to the conclusion below).

Conclusion:

Conclude this service with the Sacrament of Communion, the act by which people recognize and receive Jesus Christ as God in the flesh. Introduce the sacrament with the words of John, “to those who receive Him, to those who believe in His name, He gives the right to become children of God.”

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Week 4 – The Holy Spirit

Sermon Title:

Hospitality and the Holy Spirit

Scripture Focus: - John 14:15-21

Key verse, John 14:15 – *If you love me, you will obey what I command.*

Sermon Introduction:

Offering hospitality is not just a matter of baking cupcakes and providing a bed for someone to sleep in. It may involve food and lodging, but hospitality goes much deeper. Hospitality means creating space for and welcoming another person to enter into your life. Illustrate how someone in your life provided that kind of hospitality for you or someone else.

Most of us want more of the Holy Spirit in our lives, but in order for this to happen we need to make room for the Holy Spirit by offering the hospitality of obedience.

Sermon Content:

[READ THE TEXT – JOHN 14:15-21]

1. The Giving of the Holy Spirit (v. 15, 21)

It is significant that this passage describing the Holy Spirit is sandwiched between Jesus calling followers to “obey” his commands (see verses 15 and 21). Obedience to Christ’s commands is the evidence that we love Him. Our love for Christ opens us up to the giving of the Holy Spirit to us. There appears to be evidence that suggests the level of our commitment to God determines the level at which God invests the Holy Spirit in us. (see 2 Chronicles 16:9 and Galatians 6:7). Human obedience is, in essence, the welcome mat of hospitality for the Holy Spirit. Obedience creates space for the Spirit in our lives. And this is good because we need the Holy Spirit.

2. The Purpose of the Holy Spirit (v. 16-17a)

Why do we need the Holy Spirit? Jesus tells His followers that the Holy Spirit’s purpose is to serve as their “Counselor.” The Greek word for counselor is *paraclete* which literally means *helper*. “The Spirit of truth” (v. 17a) is another description Jesus assigns to the Holy Spirit. The purpose of the Spirit, then, is to *help* disciples align their lives obediently with the *truth* of God’s will and word. This connects perfectly with what Jesus says about the Holy Spirit in John 16:13, “He will guide you into all truth.”

3. The Nature of the Holy Spirit (v. 17b-19)

Jesus’ first disciples knew, from their reading of the Old Testament, that the Holy Spirit comes *upon* people. However, Jesus radicalizes this when He says that the Spirit “will be *in* you” (v. 17b). God places Himself within those who love Him and obey His commands. This indwelling Holy Spirit is the gift that helps followers wait in hope for the fulfillment of Jesus’ promise when He says in this passage “I will come to you....you will see me....because I live you also will live” (v. 18b-19). The Holy Spirit within followers of Christ enables us to live faithfully obedient lives until Christ returns.

Sermon Application:

The more we experience the indwelling Holy Spirit in our lives, the more we encounter His comfort, help, and guidance in the life of truth. The Holy Spirit is given more and more to those who love Christ enough to obey his commands. Our loving obedience to God opens us up to a greater outpouring of His Spirit in our lives.

Of course, disobedience has consequences as well. Disobedience stifles the movement of the Spirit in our lives. In light of this, identify one or two areas of your life in which you have been withholding obedience from God. Name them specifically. Decide today that you will do whatever it takes to obey what Christ has called you to do or abstain from doing.

You may want to give people some time to reflect on these areas during a song from your worship team or choir.

Conclusion:

If we are going to experience the spectacular nature of the Holy Spirit not just upon us but in us, and if we are going to experience the purpose of the Holy Spirit which is to help disciples live lives of truth, then we must make room for more of the Holy Spirit by offering the hospitality of loving obedience.

You may want to end the service with a special prayer time for those who want to commit to loving obedience in the specific areas of their lives noted in the application section above.

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