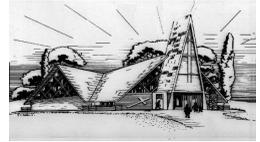




Free Evangelical Lutheran
Synod in South Africa

Sermon – Sunday Holy Trinity
The Lord Jesus reveals the Holy Trinity
to us!



St. John's Lutheran Parish Shelly Beach

The Word of God for this Sermon is written in Proverbs 8, 1-4, 22-31:

- ^{ESV} 1 Does not wisdom call? Does not understanding raise her voice?
- 2 On the heights beside the way, at the crossroads she takes her stand;
- 3 beside the gates in front of the town, at the entrance of the portals she cries aloud:
- 4 "To you, O men, I call, and my cry is to the children of man.
- ...
- 22 "The LORD possessed me at the beginning of his work, the first of his acts of old.
- 23 Ages ago I was set up, at the first, before the beginning of the earth.
- 24 When there were no depths I was brought forth, when there were no springs abounding with water.
- 25 Before the mountains had been shaped, before the hills, I was brought forth,
- 26 before he had made the earth with its fields, or the first of the dust of the world.
- 27 When he established the heavens, I was there; when he drew a circle on the face of the deep,
- 28 when he made firm the skies above, when he established the fountains of the deep,
- 29 when he assigned to the sea its limit, so that the waters might not transgress his command, when he marked out the foundations of the earth,
- 30 then I was beside him, like a master workman, and I was daily his delight, rejoicing before him always,
- 31 rejoicing in his inhabited world and delighting in the children of man.
- 32 "And now, O sons, listen to me: blessed are those who keep my ways.
- 33 Hear instruction and be wise, and do not neglect it.
- 34 Blessed is the one who listens to me, watching daily at my gates, waiting beside my doors.
- 35 For whœver finds me finds life and obtains favor from the LORD,
- 36 but he who fails to find me injures himself; all who hate me love death."
- **Let us pray:** *Come Holy Spirit, open our ears and our hearts, so that we can believe in the God of our Salvation and worship Him in His Wisdom as Father, Son and Holy Spirit, one God in three persons! Amen.*

Dear Congregation of the Holy Trinity!

- The doctrine of the Holy Trinity and especially the divinity of Christ is under massive attack by other religions, especially Islam, and new atheists alike! Christ may be a good prophet,

but He may not be Lord and God, according to these voices. This is nothing new. The Nicene Creed and also the Athanasian Creed, the long one we confess on Holy Trinity Sunday only, give witness of the ongoing battle since the second century concerning the divinity of Christ. In fact, as our Readings of today show clearly, from the very beginning of Christ's ministry, His divinity was denied especially by the scribes and Pharisees of the Judeans.

- But let us get one thing straightened out from the beginning. We must not get confused with the following two things: (1) having to fully understand the doctrine of the Trinity and (2) accepting the fact and confessing simply what the Word of God reveals us about the Triune God. Augustine, a church father from the 4th century, who lived in North Africa, explained it like this: He said he once was walking on the beach next to the ocean whilst trying to understand the doctrine of the Trinity. As he was battling along he saw a little boy playing in the sand. He watched him and he saw that the little boy had dug a hole in the sand with his little bucket. Then he was running to the ocean got some water and poured it into the little hole he had made. He continued doing this. Suddenly this hit Augustine and he started laughing out aloud.

- That is what he was trying to do, he was trying to pour the ocean into his little bucket. That is what you try to do when you try to understand how the Trinity works with your little mind. That is not something to be understood but to accept as fact and above all, the three persons of the Trinity in unity need to be worshipped. That is what a confession of faith does: We confess what we believe, what Scripture teaches us, although we will maybe never ever understand it fully with our mind! By the Grace of the Holy Trinity we worship and praise Him for working together in unity to save us! Us filthy sinners! What an astonishing act of God!

- This is where Psalm 8 comes in [3-4]: “*When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, **what is man that you are mindful of him, and the son of man that you care for him?***” It is truly astonishing! That is awesome!

- If you fly high above the earth you see the houses and cities, but you don't see the strife and fights of everyday life going on between the people. What if God would have decided, as we sometimes like to do, I am just staying out of all their troubles. I am going to hear no evil and see no evil. Let them just perish on their own. Let them sort themselves out. I wash my hands in innocence. We would not have been in church right now and we would have had no real hope at all. What is man that You remember him, which is the same as, that You care for him? In all three persons! Truly astonishing that God cares for us and wants to care for each and everyone of us! He took all our burdens on Himself, so that we can pray to Him about the struggle we have with evil in us, and receive the Absolution, the washing away of all our sins.

- The three divine persons of God are fully united in saving man whom they have created to be the image of God. They have this one mind and desire concerning you, one Spirit: To give you access to their Spirit, a Spirit of trust, of truth, of sacrificial Love, serving Love, perfect unity in desire and mind and doing! All things the world, with all its different sources

of wisdom and powers, can never ever give to you!

• God even shares His holiness with you and me, now already, today, so that He can come into our midst, as He cleansed us and is busy sanctifying us! He makes this meeting, this Divine Service possible! As He comes to the meeting He turns it into His Service! He takes over! He becomes the host, He hears our confession of sins. He absolves us. He preaches and He is the host of His Supper and He blesses us. This is the truth as long as His Word is faithfully proclaimed and His means of Grace are faithfully administered.

• We are the ones who need His coming so desperately! We are the ones who receive His means of Grace with open hearts and that is counted as faith, as praise, as worship. God speaks, we hear. God gives, we receive! Our sins are forgiven, our trust in God is strengthened and we are blessed as we leave for the mission field. God remembers us, that is, He cares for us!

• It is not us doing God a favour when we come to His service! Whoever thinks like this does not understand a thing of what is happening in the Divine Service. The Divine Communion with the Holy Trinity exists already. Jesus' Body is a reality. You are called by God to participate in His Communion!

• It is amazing: He comes to us as we call on the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit! God is in the midst of His people, not in the fulfilled way- we cannot see God, because we still have the eyes of our old body. But, we can hear Him speak, at least indirectly through His servants of the Word, His stewards of His mysteries. Isn't that in itself completely awesome?

• The persons of the Holy Trinity speak with one Word! With ONE Word, not many words, as if there could be many conflicting words of God! This idea of the many conflicting words which we are supposed to learn to hold out and to treasure, even, becomes completely absurd when we consider that the Word of God is a person! We know that this very specific Word of God became flesh, a human being like you and me. He came to fulfil the united desire of the Trinity, namely to save us from evil and to bring us back to the original joyful unity. It is absurd to speak of conflicting words of God, as if Jesus was in conflict with Himself or His Father or the Holy Spirit. Absolutely not!

• This does not rule out the fact that we have our problems to bring together the Wrath of God and the Grace of God. But this is due to the darkness and incapability of our fallen mind, not because there is a true conflict within the Godhead! We can only go by what has been revealed to us! And much has been revealed to us. Enough to keep all Christians of all times busy all their life times!

• So, this revealed Word, Christ Jesus, also came to share the Trinity's Wisdom with us, as He is the Wisdom of God as Proverbs 8 tells us so clearly. He was with the Father before all of Creation. He came to reveal the Wisdom of God. He came to reveal the three persons of the Trinity in the One Godhead. Jesus reveals and gives insight in who God is and in God's mighty Works!

• In our days the world is emotionally excited by all kinds of spiritualities, by all kinds of wow- experiences, religious people almost acting like adrenalin junkies- its all about experiencing what they like to believe is the divine. Contrary to those experiences Jesus

reveals to us the Wisdom of God: God saves us through a Word-experience! In our hearing the Gospel God saves us and we are enlightened about who made the cosmos and how also through His written and spoken Word.

- Hearing this Wisdom we begin to see everything and everyone in a new light! We realise that God in His Wisdom has designed and created not only the new Creation but also the first creation. Just listen to these beautiful verses:

- *When He established the heavens, I was there; when He drew a circle on the face of the deep, when He made firm the skies above, when He established the fountains of the deep, when He assigned to the sea its limit, so that the waters might not transgress His command, when He marked out the foundations of the earth, then I was beside Him, like a master workman, and I was daily His delight, rejoicing before Him always, rejoicing in His inhabited world and delighting in the children of man.*

- What jumps out towards us, is, the joy and pleasure God had in designing, planning and making the heavens and the world, our home, and us human beings. And what's more, the Father and the Son were rejoicing together. They were delighted about the inhabited world, about the children of Adam. They did this for us, long before we were born!

- Dear congregation, as you go out into nature, look around and one can still see something of this joy and beauty, of this design of God. Look at the ocean with God's eyes, at the stars as God must have had fun placing them all. Realise this, that the same Jesus Christ who was crucified for your and my sins spoke all of this into being, for our benefit, so that we could have life and joy.

- This speaks volumes of what God from the very beginning wanted for us: Life in abundance before Him. That is why Wisdom speaks in Proverbs 8, 35-36 and says: *"For whoever finds Me (Wisdom= Christ) finds life and obtains favour from the LORD, but he who fails to find me injures himself; all who hate me love death."*

- In the Word of Christ we find Life and receive favour from the LORD. He brings us back to Life so that we can participate in the joyful unity of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. I cannot think of a better place to be! *Glory be to the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit!*

- Let us share this with all those who have not found the Wisdom of God yet! **Amen.**

- *The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen. (2 Cor 13,14)*