

THREE IN ONES ARE EVERYWHERE!



Scripture:

Proverbs 8:1-4, 22-31

¹Does not wisdom call, and does not understanding raise her voice? ²On the heights, beside the way, at the crossroads she takes her stand; ³beside the gates in front of the town, at the entrance of the portals she cries out: ⁴“To you, O people, I call, and my cry is to all that live.

²² The LORD created me at the beginning of his work, the first of his acts of long ago. ²³Ages ago I was set up, at the first, before the beginning of the earth. ²⁴When there were no depths I was brought forth, when there were no springs abounding with water. ²⁵Before the mountains had been shaped, before the hills, I was brought forth— ²⁶when he had not yet made earth and fields, or the world’s first bits of soil. ²⁷When he established the heavens, I was there, when he drew a circle on the face of the deep, ²⁸when he made firm the skies above, when he established the fountains of the deep, ²⁹when 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, ³⁰then I was beside him, like a master worker; and I was daily his delight, rejoicing before him always, ³¹rejoicing in his inhabited world and delighting in the human race.

John 16:12-15

¹²“I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. ¹³When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth; for he will not speak on his own, but will speak whatever he hears, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. ¹⁴He will glorify me, because he will take what is mine and declare it to you. ¹⁵All that the Father has is mine. For this reason I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you.

This is the Word of the Lord! Thanks be to God!



There is a Norwegian proverb that works perfectly for Trinity Sunday. It says, "All good things come in threes."

Just think about it; there are so many patterns of three in the universe. Things are often listed in threes like a natural rhythm: sun, moon, and stars; earth, wind, and fire; faith, hope and love, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

In this passage today, Jesus is speaking and he is talking about the Holy Spirit and God the father. So all three of the Trinity are mentioned in this passage.

UNDERSTANDING THE TRINITY

The shield on the front of your bulletin and under the sermon title on page one, was designed as a way to understand the Trinity. When you look at this graphic, you see starting from the Pater, which is Latin for Father, if you go inward on the shield it shows that the Father is God, and then go in from Filius, (Latin for Son) where it says Filius est (is) Deus (which means God). Then you see it says, the Son is God. Then on the bottom of the shield going up towards Deus it says, the Holy Spirit is God; God is the Father, God is the Son, God is the Holy Spirit. Spiritus means spirit.

Then going around the circle on the outside it tells what is not the same: The Pater (Father) is not the Son, the Son is not the Father, the Father is not the Holy Spirit, the Holy Spirit is not the Father. "Not" in Latin is "non." Pretty creative, huh!

THE PATTERN OF THREE

The pattern of three or the rule of three (as some people call it) is thought to exhibit not only the Trinity, but also strength. Like strength in numbers!

What do you believe? Are things really stronger when they come in threes? A rope on a sailboat is a good metaphor for strength in threes. A ship's rope is made up of three strands of hemp wound together to create strength enough to tie up a large boat. The

three strands that make up a rope are like the strong bond in the trinity with God, the Son, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit.

When I conduct marriage ceremonies I encourage the new couple to invite God into their marriage so the three of them can work together and be strong like a ship's rope to stabilize the marriage during the storms and tribulations that eventually happen.

The idea of strength in threes comes from Ecclesiastes 4:12 (written in 950 BC). It reflects on how two is good but three is the best number for strength. It says, "Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. But a cord of three strands is not quickly broken."

Although the Trinity isn't specifically mentioned as "the Trinity" in the Bible, our earliest creeds used the symbol of the Trinity to understand the complexity and mystery of our God. St. Patrick famously used the three leaf clover to explain the Trinity to the Irish.



Overall, the Scriptures teach that God is one in three. He is one essence with three distinct persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

The Trinity is first mentioned in the Bible in the Old Testament with Creation. Whether one begins in Genesis 1 or looks to other passages concerning Creation (Psalm 33:6; Proverbs 8:22, or Isaiah 57) it is clear that all three persons of the Trinity are present and involved in Creation.

And then later in the Bible we see lots of threes mentioned. Moses had three sons; the

Ark of the Covenant contained three sacred objects.

In the New Testament Jesus told the Jewish populace at the Temple, "Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days"

Peter denied he knew Jesus three times.

And Jesus rose from the dead three days after being sacrificed. Later, as part of his forgiveness, Jesus asked Peter three times to "Feed my Sheep."

THREES IN NATURE

Outside the Bible there are threes found in nature everywhere to remind us that God is everywhere. Your body is basically blood, sweat, and tears. Or to put it more scientifically: the majority of the human body is made of oxygen, hydrogen, and carbon.

According to some math experts, three is the easiest number to remember. So now we all need to go change our passwords to include more threes! Some call this a "rule of three." That is a principle that suggests things that come in threes are more effective than other numbers. For example, when giving speeches or lectures, audiences are more likely to remember information presented in threes. So many things are structured in threes, like the common cheer, "Go, Fight, Win!" And you probably know the Latin phrase, "*omne trium perfectum*," (everything that comes in threes is perfect).

BORROMEAN RINGS

Three is a fascinating symbol that reflects the Trinity in mathematics, too. The Borromean rings consist of three circles which are linked and form a Brunnian link. However, if you remove any ring, the system falls apart. In other words, no two of the three rings are linked with each other, at the same time, all three are linked.

**By being one in three in the Trinity,
God is showing us
how to be relational,
how to work in community,
how to honor diversity
and how to be inclusive
all at the same time.**

THE SHACK

Do you remember the book *The Shack*? The Trinitarian God in *The Shack* is a beautiful illustration of how the Trinity might look in real life. The Shack is a Christian novel by William P. Young. The novel became a bestseller, and sold over one- million copies.

Mack, the main character, suffers the great loss of losing his five year old daughter to a serial killer. He struggles to find a way to understand the tragedy of it all, so he goes alone to the shack where the police found some of his daughter's clothing. Mack enters the shack and after some soul searching, he encounters manifestations of the three persons of the Trinity.

God takes the form of an African American woman called Elousia and Papa. (Oprah played that part in the movie.) Jesus Christ is a Middle-Eastern carpenter; and the Holy Spirit physically manifests as an Asian woman named Sarayu. They all represent God to Mack and help him heal his wounds of grief and loss.

MOMMY, DADDY, GRANDMA

Another story illustrates the concept of the Trinity as Mommy, Daddy, Grandma.

Professor Alyce McKenzie tells the story of her friend, Dale who had a two-year-old daughter, Katie. He and his wife, Debbie, and Debbie's mom (the grandmother) shared in Katie's care.

One evening, while Debbie and her mom were out grocery shopping, Dale was given the job of caring for Katie and making dinner. So he bathed Katie, put her in her

footie pajamas, and sat her down with some toys in the family room while he made dinner.

When Dale opened the oven to put the green bean casserole in, he realized he had forgotten the French fried onions. So he left the oven door open, as he went to the pantry to get them. Suddenly he heard a sizzling sound and a child's cry and turned to see Katie with her hands on the oven rack screaming! He scooped her up, rushed her to the Emergency Room and Debbie and her Mom met them there.

Little Katie lay on the metal table with her eyes squeezed tightly shut as the doctor bandaged her hands and assured her three caregivers who stood around her that she would heal just fine.

They were all so upset, sorrowfully gazing at little Katie on the table when Debbie asked Dale, "What is she saying? Her lips are moving." Dale leaned forward and heard her whispering over and over again, "Mommy, Daddy, Grandma . . . Mommy, Daddy, Grandma . . . Mommy, Daddy, Grandma.

Dale said he was just glad he made the cut! He was happy to be one of the three she still trusted.

In difficult times, we do well to trust in the power of three. The best parents slip up and life can hold unexpected traumas, but when the three-in-one names we recite are "Father, Son, and Holy Spirit," we can face the worst that life can dish up.

As Trinitarian Christians we are to remember and call on the power of the One in Three and the Three in One. God is with us always but not in an imposing way. God often waits for our call.

IT GOES ON

The poet Robert Frost said it this way: "In three words I can sum up everything I've learned about life: 'It goes on.'"

The community of the Church of the Roses is meant to help the church and each

other "go on." The purpose for the life of the church is to show all those around this community that the compassionate Trinitarian presence of God is here, creating, loving, diverse, inclusive, and forgiving. We are strong thanks to the bond we have with the Trinity and with one another.

Jesus came to show us how to have life and have it abundantly. And the Holy Spirit came to guide us to live abundant lives, helping and serving one another, building up the church to be the community of faith, hope, and love it is meant to be.

You are the church of the Triune God. Turn to the people on each side of you and see how the three of you standing together are stronger than one.

Let's call on the Power of Three in the Trinity as we live these days: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; Our Parent Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer, who seeks to love us and guide us every moment.

Let's call on the Power of the Three-in-One and One-in-Three and boldly go out into the world with faith, hope, and love always on our lips and in our hearts and minds. Amen

Benediction:

And may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you now and forever more. Amen



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