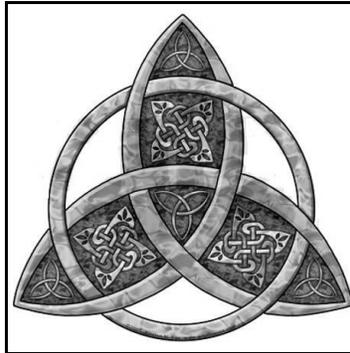


## **THREE IS BETTER THAN ONE**



**Scripture:**

**Psalm 29**

<sup>1</sup>Ascribe to the LORD, O heavenly beings, ascribe to the LORD glory and strength. <sup>2</sup>Ascribe to the LORD the glory of his name; worship the LORD in holy splendor.

<sup>3</sup>The voice of the LORD is over the waters; the God of glory thunders, the LORD, over mighty waters. <sup>4</sup>The voice of the LORD is powerful; the voice of the LORD is full of majesty.

<sup>5</sup>The voice of the LORD breaks the cedars; the LORD breaks the cedars of Lebanon. <sup>6</sup>He makes Lebanon skip like a calf, and Sirion like a young wild ox.

<sup>7</sup>The voice of the LORD flashes forth flames of fire. <sup>8</sup>The voice of the LORD shakes the wilderness; the LORD shakes the wilderness of Kadesh.

<sup>9</sup>The voice of the LORD causes the oaks to whirl, and strips the forest bare; and in his temple all say, “Glory!”

<sup>10</sup>The LORD sits enthroned over the flood; the LORD sits enthroned as king forever. <sup>11</sup>May the LORD give strength to his people! May the LORD bless his people with peace!

**Romans 8:12-17**

As I read our 2<sup>nd</sup> Scripture reading, notice the references to the Trinity.

<sup>12</sup>So then, brothers and sisters, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh — <sup>13</sup>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. <sup>14</sup>For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God. <sup>15</sup>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!’

<sup>16</sup>it is that very Spirit bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God, <sup>17</sup>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.

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



This past week on Facebook one of my friends asked, “If you could rid the world of one thing, what would it be?” Shout out some ideas.

I suggested the world should get rid of fear, because it is the basis of greed and the beginning of so many conflicts between people, and

countries. When we fear the unknown, fear the stranger, fear death or fear pain, we can become enslaved by fear.

This passage today addresses fear, and how God’s adoption of us, (making us heirs of the kingdom of God), reassures us of God’s deep

love. That is truly the core of faith. Trusting in the love of God banishes fear. One of the ways to trust in God is to seek to know God better.

### **THE DOCTRINE OF THE TRINITY**

The Presbyterian Church USA is trying to help us all know God better by helping us understand the doctrine of the Trinity. The Office of Worship and Theology at General Assembly believes the Trinity is poorly understood and they want to fix that.

Of course we already know everything there is to know about the Trinity. Right? The Trinity is a man-made concept created in an effort to better understand our mysterious God. You will not find the term “the Trinity” in the Bible, but most theologians, like Saint Patrick, believe that the activity of God can only be understood in Trinitarian terms. God is active (not passive) in a relational pattern of three. (Look at the cover of the Bulletin.)

### **‘GOD’S LOVE OVERFLOWING’**

I want to share with you just an excerpt from the PCUSA paper on the Trinity titled “*God’s Love Overflowing*,” which is a metaphor, deeply rooted in scripture and Christian tradition, that speaks of the infinite ways the triune God loves all of creation, including humankind.

“*God’s Love Overflowing*” expresses love that flows boundlessly from the triune God who seeks and saves us, reconciles and renews us, and draws us into loving relationships that reflect the eternal oneness of God.

Christians are baptized and blessed in the name of the Triune God (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) as we witnessed today. What a perfect day for baptisms!

**The love of the triune God made known to us in Jesus Christ by the Holy Spirit is beyond measure. It is given freely and extravagantly, utterly unmerited and unexpected. It is always greater than we can imagine.**

Like a waterfall, God’s love overflows to us. It freely pours in an inexhaustible stream, never drying up.

### **A MYSTERY**

The Trinity is a constant and trustworthy three for the price of one. Yet it is also a mystery beyond human comprehension. The concept of the trinity acknowledges that the very being of God exceeds our understanding. And the amazing thing is, we are invited to participate in this mystery that has been revealed to us by God’s “own self-disclosure in Jesus Christ” and in the coming of the Holy Spirit who binds us to Christ.”

God’s self-disclosure in Jesus Christ showed us in action what God’s love looks like, and the Holy Spirit part of the Trinity illuminates our minds to comprehend the scriptures and then apply them to our daily lives. That’s why we say a prayer for illumination before the scriptures each Sunday.

God’s self-disclosure is such an incredible concept isn’t it? Why would God care to self-disclose God’s self to us?

### **KARL BARTH**

Karl Barth, the German theologian who wrote an in-depth analysis of God, came to the conclusion that God is slowly revealing more of God’s self to us over time. In his huge exposition called *Church Dogmatics*, Barth concluded that God is totally contained, not needing anything from others. And yet God reached out to the “other” (us humans) because our God is a relational God who wants to be with us. The pattern of the Trinity is a symbol of the relationality in the character of God.

Karl Barth also wrote about eternity and said it could only be understood in the light of the relationships of the three persons of the Trinity. We tend to think of eternity as everlasting time. But the Bible speaks of eternity as everlasting relationships. Each member of the Trinity, Father, Son, and Spirit are always in communion with one another. And we, as children of God, are adopted into that relationship with God, not due to any action of our own but because God loves all of creation so much we are all adopted and heirs of God’s kingdom. As it said today in Romans 8, “For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received a spirit of adoption.”

The Trinity or triune God has adopted you into a Trinity family made up of our Creator, Son, and Holy Spirit and you. We are always in communion with God whether we are aware of it or not. And for that we should be grateful!!

### **GOD – THE WORLD’S FUTURE**

Ted Peters, a professor of systematic theology who prolifically writes about science and religion, expands the concept of the relational Trinity in his book, “God is personal through one or another of the three persons. And the net effect of the doctrine of the Trinity is to understand the divine reality as a unity of relation.”

**Peters goes on to say,  
“The Trinitarian understanding of God  
is that God’s full self-investment in  
the incarnation redefines divinity  
to include humanity.”**

### **PATTERNS OF THREE**

In 2010, I wrote a paper for a Cosmology course. I titled the paper: *The Symbol of the Trinity Reflected in the Relational Three-Patterned Character of the Cosmos*. As I researched for the paper, I found so many patterns of three everywhere!

The more humans discover about the creation and fundamental structure of the cosmos, the more we see the triune nature of God reflected all around us. Think about it; in our galaxy we see the pattern of three in relationship: stars, moons, and planets

In molecular matter we have the pattern of three in protons, neutrons, electrons. Living matter on earth all depends upon water, air, and soil. All matter must exist in one of three forms: solid, liquid, or gas.

The strongest geometric pattern is the three sided triangle.

Also in human biology our bodies have patterns of three. Human hearts have three valves. Human blood is made up of: white blood cells, red blood cells and platelets. Our body needs three basic elements to sustain life: protein, carbohydrates, and water. And three

physiological systems necessary for life are the neurological brain, cardiac, and pulmonary systems.

Social patterns also come in threes, father, mother, child. Remember the movie *Yours, Mine, and Ours?*

In first grade it was me, Marcia and Jane. The three of us would walk around the playground hand in hand every recess. Some people called us the three musketeers. Sometimes we would fight about who got to walk in the middle. One day Marcia was walking in the middle and we decided to play three blind mice and shut our eyes and run down a steep ravine. Poor Marcia broke her leg! That day three was not better than one for Marcia. But it is interesting how humans gravitate towards a pattern of three even in personal relationships. We say things like “Third times a charm,” or “Bad things always happen in threes!”

Humans are created in the image of a Trinitarian creator as body, mind, and spirit. The triune three-pattern is reflected in the basic structure of our DNA. DNA proteins are made up of codons, each with three base pairs of amino acids. Quarks are the tiniest particles that make a proton. They exist in threes: two up quarks and one down quark.

Does it really matter, knowing there are so many patterns of three in the world? Maybe the Trinity three is a symbol of reaching out beyond ourselves??

### **EINSTEIN**

Albert Einstein answers the question this way: “A human being is a part of the whole 'universe,' a part limited in time and space. He/she experiences self, through thoughts and feelings as something separated from the rest... But that separation is a kind of optical delusion of consciousness. This delusion is a kind of prison for us, restricting us to our personal desires and to affection for a few persons nearest to us. Our task must be to free ourselves from this prison by widening our circle of compassion to embrace all living creatures and the whole of nature in its beauty.”

The Cosmos is created to be relational. What happens in one part of the Universe reverberates in another. The Universe is considered a living

organism that is relational as are the smaller living organisms that inhabit it.

**Vaclav Havel once said, "We are mysteriously connected to the entire Universe, we are mirrored in it as the entire universe is mirrored in us."**

Being created in the image of God whose essence is relational in the Trinity leads us to see that all creation is relational, including the Universe.

You were born to be relational. Don't isolate yourself away. Remember three is usually better than one.

Jesus died on a cross between two robbers. He was not alone. The symbol of the Trinity was hanging side by side on the hill of Calvary.

Ted Peters concludes his book by saying, "Down at our deepest level we do not want to be alone." And we are not! The Bible testifies to this in the name, *Emmanuel*, "God with us." Thanks be to God! Amen

#### **Prayer of the People for Trinity Sunday:**

O triune God, what an exciting mystery we celebrate today, that you, our God, are three persons in one being. Your essence is so awesome, it is beyond our understanding. We thank you for your care and concern for our loved ones today. You understand all the suffering when we are suffering and all the joys when we are joyful. Be with those on our prayer requests.

Thank you for the Haiti mission team's successful work at the two orphanages and for Brooke's fast recovery from surgery so he can be with us today. Bless Joy Steele and Patsy Johnson with your healing grace as they recover at Santa Rosa Memorial. Help us do all we can to warmly embrace our new members so they feel to be an important new addition to our church family.

O Heavenly mother, you adopted us as your children with great love through the death and resurrection of your Son. O Holy Spirit, you gave us faith in Jesus through power of the gospel. You proudly claim us as your children. O holy Trinity, your saving love overflows and overwhelms us. Keep us all safe, health, and wise as we declare: Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God almighty! With grateful hearts we pray the prayer you taught us saying: Our Father who art in heaven .... Amen

#### **Benediction: From Saint Patrick:**

**We bind unto ourselves today the strong name of the Trinity, by invocation of the same, the Three in One, and One in Three.**

**Of whom all nature has creation; Eternal Father, Spirit, Word. Praise to the Lord of our salvation; Salvation is of Christ the Lord.**

**So fear not, for you are part of the Trinity and God is always with YOU!**

**Now may you be aware that: the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit is with you now and forever more. Amen**



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May 31, 15**