

**“Beginning to End”**

Gen. 1:1-5, 26-27, 2:2-3; 2 Cor. 13:11-13; Mt. 28:16-20

Last Sunday, as some of you may recall, the weather in the afternoon was a ‘bit’ on the inclement side. It rained like HECK! A perfect day to lay down and ‘curl up’ with a good movie. And as God’s providence would have it, one of my personal favorites (as well as Barrie’s) was on: *“A Few Good Men.”* (NO, not about the 12 disciples of Jesus. ☺) How many of you are familiar with it? As you know, its two biggest stars are Jack Nicholson and Tom Cruise... one of the few movies I actually LIKE the latter in. (and the main one? Of course... *“Top Gun.”* Sequel? I don’t know...

Anyway, as you may recall, there are two young marines on trial for the fatal use of a disciplinary action known as a ‘Code Red.’ A somewhat **mysterious** means of keeping **order** and **conformity** for **wayward** soldiers. At one point in the trial, a corporal from the deceased soldier’s unit is asked by the prosecution attorney (Kevin Bacon) to show the court just where one finds that term ‘Code Red’ in the Official USMC Regulations. When this corporal (played by Noah Wylie, before he left the Marines to work in the “ER”) says that this term does not appear anywhere in print, attorney Bacon concludes that it therefore must not exist. Defense attorney Cruise follows up by asking the witness to locate some other terms in their military handbook: “mess hall”, and “latrine.” When these two are also declared not to be in the book, Cruise asks if THEY exist... and if so, how does he know about them. To which he replies, ‘Well, yes sir, they do **feed us** pretty **well**... 3 squares a day. And as far as how you know about it, I guess you just **follow** all the other guys, and then you can **know** it for yourself.’

Today, in our church liturgical calendar, we celebrate “Trinity Sunday.” That day on which we pay special tribute to the ‘Triune God’... Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. That foundational principle of both Protestant and Roman Catholic churches that we are “Trinitarian” in nature. And yet, as you and I peruse this ‘official handbook’ of the Christian faith known as “The Holy Bible,’ we would be Hard-pressed to find even one reference to the word “Trinity.” And yet, it is as fundamentally important as breathing in and out... taking in food and, well, you know... It is that corporate experience of faith in which we **follow** in the

footsteps of those who have **come before us**, and through whom we will come to **experience God for ourselves** in the fullest way possible. And even if we don't find that word "Trinity" literally expressed, we can yet be **fed** quite well in that three-fold nature of God as we study the Scriptures, our **guidelines** for being a 'soldier in the army of God.' That in truth, we find the Holy Trinity in God's Word **"from beginning to end."**

Most all of us are familiar with those opening words of the first book of the Bible, *Genesis*. **"In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth."** (*Gen. 1:1*) It then goes on to say that the earth was **"a formless void and darkness"**... and that a **"wind from God swept over the face of the waters."** Most other translations use the term **"the Spirit of God."** And that in conjunction with this "Spirit", God then said, **"Let there be light, and there was light."** (*Gen. 1:3*) And so, from the very beginning of our earth, there was not only a Creator God, but also the Spirit of God, a sweeping wind that moved, and was an integral part of bringing light out of darkness.

Then, in verse 26, we read a very interesting quote about God's continuing creative power: **"Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness..."** (*Gen. 1:26*) God, whom we can think of readily as a singular entity, speaks in plural pronouns. **[repeat]** And just who IS this 'us?' We've heard references to 'God' and the 'Spirit,' but is there more than simply this 'Dynamic Duo?' God... which is, in the original Hebrew language, a *plural* noun... speaks of making human beings in the same 'image' and 'likeness' as God's self. Perhaps there is a clue to the full identity of this 'us' in that word 'humankind.' Or, as it often simply referred to, "man." The Hebrew word for man is one that we are all quite familiar with: **"Adam."**

And when we think of the 'image' or 'likeness' that corresponds to 'humankind'.... To 'man'.... What comes to mind? JESUS. "God made flesh." Or, as Paul would refer to him, the 'last Adam.' In his first letter to the church in Corinth, the Apostle wrote that **"The first man Adam became a living being; the last Adam, a life-giving spirit. ...The first man was of the dust of the earth, the second man from heaven... And just as we have borne the likeness of the earthly man, so shall we bear the likeness of the man from heaven."** (*1 Cor. 15:45-49*).

And so, even though the term 'Trinity' is not found in all of Scripture, there has been a three-fold nature of God from the very beginning of creation: God the Creator (**"El Shaddai,"**

God Almighty)... God the moving, sustaining Spirit, who helped bring light out of the darkness... and God the likeness of the man from heaven we know as "Jesus"... the One who is the 'life-giving,' Redeemer and Savior.

So just WHY is this concept of a 'Trinity,' this mysterious three-person identity of God important? What does it mean to US? Well, let's 'fast forward' from the 'beginning' to Jesus' last words to His disciples before the 'end' of his earthly ministry. We read that His followers went to the **'mountain where Jesus had directed them.'** (Matt. 28:16) They went to a special holy place because their Lord commanded them to do so. The Scriptures then say that **"when they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted."** (Matt. 28:17) Hmm... those **faithful believers** in Jesus **obeyed** Him by going to a **special place of worship to honor him...** and even at that holy time of fellowship with their Lord, there were **some** who yet **doubted** their **faith** in Him. Do you think that any of US might fit that description?

In the midst of their 'worship'... and 'doubt'... Jesus then proclaims some of his most memorable, powerful words: **"All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.<sup>19</sup> Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,<sup>20</sup> and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age."** (Matt.28:19-20)

Jesus is saying, 'Listen to what I am telling you, because all power, all authority in heaven and earth has been given to ME. Your command is this: GO and MAKE DISCIPLES in ALL the world. BAPTIZE them in the name of FATHER, SON, and HOLY SPIRIT. TEACH them to OBEY what I have taught YOU. And DON'T FORGET... I will ALWAYS be with you.'

Aside from that foundational statement of Jesus' describing the PURPOSE of His coming to the people of this earth: **"God so loved the world that He gave his only begotten son, that whosoever believes in him shall not perish, but have everlasting life."** (John 3:16), this passage from Matthew 28 is the singular most significant expression of God's PERFECT PLAN for how we are to carry forth Christ's continuing mission to those people for whom He came to earth. It is both the WHAT we are to do, and the HOW we are to do it.

God the **FATHER**, who brought all of heaven and earth into creations, has commanded us, His children, to not simply BE followers of His, but to GO and MAKE MORE of them! **“Go and make disciples.”** Why? Because ‘DADDY’ TOLD US SO! I don’t know about you, but when my father told me to do something, I did it. Out of ‘fear?’ Maybe some. But mainly out of RESPECT. Because I knew that he loved me. Because I trusted that he always had my best interests at heart.

God’s beloved Son Jesus further tells us that to make disciples we must **“teach them to obey all that I have commanded you.”** (Matt. 28:20) Who is the most tangible, relevant, flesh-and-blood example of living a life that is obedient to the commands of our Heavenly Father? **JESUS**. We are to be living examples of the teachings of God’s son Jesus. Not only to inspire **others** by the wisdom and compassion of our Lord Christ, but ALSO in order to continue to build **ourselves** up... for as they say, we learn best for ourselves as we teach others.

And finally, there are those encouraging final words of Jesus: **“I am with you always, even to the very end of the age.”** Jesus’ disciples would shortly see that He physically was to be taken up to heaven... how could he promise to ‘be with them always?’ In earlier words to his followers, in John’s Gospel, Jesus said that **“In a little while the world will not see me... (but) I will not leave you orphaned. ...the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything and remind you of all that I have said to you.”** (John 14:18-19, 26) Though God sometimes seem like a distant, unfathomable Almighty King... and that Christ is separated from us by 2000 years of tumultuous human history... we have the promise that through the Holy Spirit, the Father and the Son say to us, **“I am with you always”**... ‘reminding us of all that has been said to us.’ In the words of that TV car commercial, **“Every day!”** As we continue to baptize... and recall our own baptism... **“in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit,”** we remind ourselves of the powerful **truth** of the holy mystery of our God... who is ‘three in one.’ Father, Son, Spirit.

...In speaking of God’s ‘TRUTH,’ as I spoke earlier of that movie “A Few Good Men,” some of you may recall that most famous interchange between Tom Cruise and Jack Nicholson: Where the attorney confronts the witness with the demand, **“I want the truth!”** To which the arrogant commander replies, **“You can’t handle the truth!”** Well, we too are called as

'witnesses' to 'testify' on behalf of a God who is often 'on trial' in the minds of many an 'arrogant' unbeliever... we too are called to live by a type of 'code red.' Similar to our military cohorts, in seeking to live to a higher standard, our life can also sometimes be a **difficult, dangerous expression** of how we are to **live a disciplined life** in the **fulfillment** of our **service to others**. Though perhaps not expressly used in Scripture, the importance of the Trinity is indeed expressed throughout God's Word. That as faithful followers, may we live by our own personal 'code red': the **LOVE** of the Father. The **BLOOD** of the Son. The **FIRE** of the Spirit. And THAT, my brothers and sisters, is a TRUTH that you can most certainly 'handle.' **[Hold up Bible.]**

**"From Beginning to End."**

#### CHARGE & BENEDICTION

In closing with 'good words' of sending on this Trinity Sunday, I would leave you with the classic words of 'benediction' from the words of Paul we read earlier from 2 *Corinthians*: ***"Finally, brothers and sisters, farewell. Put things in order, encourage one another, agree with one another, live in peace; and the God of love and peace will be with you.<sup>12</sup> Greet one another with a holy kiss. All the saints greet you.<sup>13</sup> The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with all of you."***