**Sermon for Trinity Sunday-C**

**Bethlehem Lutheran Church, Aiken, South Carolina**

06-15-25

THE ATHANASIAN CREED with HOMILIES

C **Whoever desires to be saved must, above all, hold the catholic faith.**

**Whoever does not keep it whole and undefiled will without doubt perish eternally.**

**And the catholic faith is this, that we worship one God in Trinity and Trinity in Unity, neither confusing the persons nor dividing the substance.**

P HOMILY

Whoever desires to be saved must, above all, hold he catholic faith. This is not Catholic with a capital “C”, but catholic with a lower case “c”. We are most certainly not confessing that, in order to be saved from eternal damnation, one must be a member of the Roman Catholic church, or for that matter, the Lutheran church, or any other denomination. Neither did Athanasius, nor does the creed named in honor of him, declare such a thing.

While the word catholic has become inextricably connected to the Roman church, the word itself actually means “universal,’ or that which everyone holds in common. For example, the fact that the sun rises in the east could be called catholic, or common, knowledge. It is assumed that, if one knows nothing else about the sun, one knows that, in the morning, it rises in the east. It’s a simple fact, everyone knows it, and there is nothing to debate.

And the catholic, that is, commonly held, faith is this, that we worship one God in Trinity and Trinity in Unity, neither confusing the persons nor dividing the substance. In other words, everyone whose faith is in the one, true, and living God, worships the triune God; the Holy Trinity; one God in three Persons.

The fact that God is triune is catholic, in other words, common knowledge, among those who believe in the one, true, and living God; the God of the Holy Scriptures. The Holy Trinity is universally believed and confessed by all of God’s people of all time; from Adam and Eve, to Noah and Moses, to the prophets and apostles, to you and me, and to everyone who will come after us. Apart from the Trinity, there is no other God; only false gods, and false teachings.

C  **For the Father is one person, the Son is another, and the Holy Spirit is another.**

**But the Godhead of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit is one: the glory equal, the majesty coeternal.**

**Such as the Father is, such is the Son, and such is the Holy Spirit:**

**the Father uncreated, the Son uncreated, the Holy Spirit uncreated;**

**the Father infinite, the Son infinite, the Holy Spirit infinite;**

**the Father eternal, the Son eternal, the Holy Spirit eternal.**

**And yet there are not three Eternals, but one Eternal,**

**just as there are not three Uncreated or three Infinites, but one Uncreated and one Infinite.**

P HOMILY

The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are not three different gods, but one God in three Persons. The three Persons of the Godhead are not compartmentalized, nor are they departmentalized. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are not restricted to certain aspects of God’s works.

While we especially associate the Father with creation, the Son with redemption, and the Holy Spirit with sanctification, these areas of God’s working are not the exclusive domain or work of one particular Person of the Trinity, as if they were three separate gods, or the Persons existed in a hierarchy, or each had different skill sets.

Where one Person of the Godhead is at work, there God in his entirety is present and working. We see this in the account of the creation in Genesis; in Jesus’ baptism, and in His earthly ministry, to name a few specific examples.

C **In the same way, the Father is almighty, the Son almighty, the Holy Spirit almighty;**

**and yet there are not three Almighties, but one Almighty.**

**So the Father is God, the Son is God, the Holy Spirit is God;**

**and yet there are not three Gods, but one God.**

**So the Father is Lord, the Son is Lord, the Holy Spirit is Lord;**

**and yet there are not three Lords, but one Lord.**

P HOMILY

I have been asked, who should we address when we pray; the Father, the Son, or the Holy Spirit? When you pray to God, it does not matter if you address your prayers and petitions to one or all three Persons of the Trinity, or to God in general because, where God is, there is the whole God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Where we have one Person of the Trinity, there are all three Persons of the Trinity. The Persons do not exist in a hierarchy, or chain of command, where your prayers are referred up or down the line.

Contrary to other Christian traditions, which teach that one prays to certain saints, depending on the nature of one’s petition, or the pagan traditions, in which different deities or spirits do different things, the truth is that the kingdom of God is not a bureaucracy.

The kingdom of God is the eternal, perfect, divine monarchy. When the Christian prays, he prays directly to God, the eternal king, who hears and answers, providing according to his perfect, divine will, always for the well-being of his people, totally out of perfect love and mercy. God even helps us in our prayers; the Scriptures state that, imperfect as our prayers may be, the Holy Spirit intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. This is how much God cares about you.

C **Just as we are compelled by the Christian truth to acknowledge each distinct person as God and Lord, so also are we prohibited by the catholic religion to say that there are three Gods or Lords.**

**The Father is not made nor created nor begotten by anyone.**

**The Son is neither made nor created, but begotten of the Father alone.**

**The Holy Spirit is of the Father and of the Son, neither made nor created nor begotten, but proceeding.**

**Thus, there is one Father, not three Fathers; one Son, not three Sons; one Holy Spirit, not three Holy Spirits.**

P HOMILY

The second Person of the Trinity is neither created, nor made, but begotten by the Father alone. Although we cannot comprehend it, the Son, the second Person of the Trinity, is begotten from eternity; though begotten of the Father, the Son, as with all three Persons of the Godhead, has always been. From our Old Testament reading, we have this account from Proverbs; *The Lord possessed me at the beginning of his work, the first of his acts of old…* *when he established the heavens I was there…* *then I was beside him, like a master workman, and I was daily his delight, rejoicing in him always, rejoicing in his inhabited world and delighting in the children of man.*

This is the Son of God, present with the Father, working to bring forth the creation, and rejoicing in it with the Father.

In the creation account in Genesis, God the Father, the first Person of the Trinity, speaks everything into existence. God creates and gives life through his Word, the second Person of the Trinity. The third Person, the Spirit, hovers above the waters. When God makes man, he breathes his Spirit into the lifeless clay, giving man life, and an eternal soul. Once again, the one, true and living God is eternal, and has eternally been the triune God.

C  **And in this Trinity none is before or after another; none is greater or less than another; but the whole three persons are coeternal with each other and coequal, so that in all things, as has been stated above, the Trinity in Unity and Unity in Trinity is to be worshiped. Therefore, whoever desires to be saved must think thus about the Trinity.**

P HOMILY

God the Holy Trinity is the one and only Creator and ruler over all things visible and invisible. But that’s not all. He is our king, but he is not a distant, detached king. Nor is the creation the equivalent of a wind-up toy that he has made for his amusement. God is very aware of, and involved with, absolutely everything regarding his creation, the crown of which is mankind.

God loves his creation, and he especially loves you. It was heartbreaking for him when Satan, and some other angels along with him, rebelled and were cast out of heaven, after which, Satan set about to be the destroyer of everything that God had created, most especially that which he loves the most; his children; mankind.

Satan’s attack was a great success; paradise was lost, sin entered the world, and with it, death. But God’s eternal foreknowledge was far, far ahead of Satan’s fatal designs. From eternity, God had determined that he would be not only our king, but our priest; the one who would intercede between us and himself, and make atoning sacrifice for our sins, in order to bring us back into the realm of eternal life with him. From eternity, God had determined that his only begotten Son would become the Son of man.

C **But it is also necessary for everlasting salvation that one faithfully believe the incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ.**

**Therefore, it is the right faith that we believe and confess that our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is at the same time both God and man.**

**He is God, begotten from the substance of the Father before all ages; and He is man, born from the substance of His mother in this age: perfect God and perfect man, composed of a rational soul and human flesh;**

**equal to the Father with respect to His divinity, less than the Father with respect to His humanity.**

P HOMILY

The long promised Messiah, the Christ, is the second Person of the Holy Trinity, the only begotten Son of God from eternity. The human mind cannot conceive nor comprehend that almighty God would humble himself to become dirt; to assume unto himself that dust which we are, and to which we must return.

At a specific time and place in world history, the second Person of the Holy Trinity became man; a helpless infant, in fact, who had to be cared for and protected by His earthly parents, and be subject to them as He grew into adulthood. Jesus is the name given to Him at His birth; Jesus, which means “The Lord is our salvation.”

Being God, Jesus always knew exactly who He is, and the purpose for which He had become incarnate. Being human, Jesus suffered everything that you and I suffer, was tempted in every way that you and I are tempted, felt every emotion that you and I feel, and had every need that you and I have.

Unlike you and I, Jesus remained perfectly sinless in every aspect of His life, because He Himself is perfectly sinless. Though He is God in the flesh, Jesus humbled Himself to suffer just as we do, and be subject to God the Father, just as we are, even permitting himself to be crucified; for this is why He came into the world; that His own suffering and death would restore your broken relationship with God, and impart to you eternal life.

C **Although He is God and man, He is not two, but one Christ:**

**one, however, not by the conversion of the divinity into flesh, but by the assumption of the humanity into God; one altogether, not by confusion of substance, but by unity of person.**

**For as the rational soul and flesh is one man, so God and man is one Christ,**

**who suffered for our salvation, descended into hell, rose again the third day from the dead, ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of the Father, God Almighty, from whence He will come to judge the living and the dead.**

P HOMILY

Jesus’ resurrection from the dead, and ascension back to heaven, is proof positive that He has done it; full atonement has been made, your sins are forgiven, and God considers you righteous and beloved because of the blood of Jesus Christ.

For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life. Jesus reigns from heaven above, now working through His church on earth to proclaim the good news; the gospel of forgiveness and eternal life, and His imminent return at the end of the world.

C **At His coming all people will rise again with their bodies and give an account concerning their own deeds.**

**And those who have done good will enter into eternal life, and those who have done evil into eternal fire.**

P HOMILY

Jesus Christ has, once and for all, defeated sin and death, and Satan himself, who uses our sins against us, in order to try to convince us that God could never forgive us, and that our physical deaths will find us consigned to the torments of hell, separated forever from God. Jesus’ life, suffering, death, and resurrection show Satan to be a liar.

Whoever repents of their sins and believes that, for Christ’s sake, they are forgiven, has eternal life and has been saved from hell. But, whoever does not believe remains in their sins, and their destiny is eternity in hell, along with Satan and his demons.

Though Satan continues to taunt, and tempt, and otherwise try to draw us away from Christ, the Rock of our salvation, we keep our eyes firmly fixed upon the cross, and upon our baptism, in which the Holy Trinity came to us, received us unto Himself, and hid our lives in the life of Jesus Christ the crucified.

At the Last Day, the account that the repentant believers shall give of themselves before God is only Jesus’ work for them; not anything that they have done. Because of Christ, your sins are gone. Before God, the only works recounted will be the works of Christ through you.

C **This is the catholic faith; whoever does not believe it faithfully and firmly cannot be saved.**

P May God the Holy Spirit seal unto our hearts these words. And may the peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus the Lord. Amen.