

## Keeping the Trinitarian Faith

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### Our Savior's Way Lutheran Church    Pastor Tyson Labuhn

Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Character. Decency. Goodness. Honesty. Righteousness. These are all synonyms for the word, Integrity. Something that we want to have in our relationships. Because if someone tells us, "I'll take care of it..." and we come to find out that the task wasn't done, or if someone says that they'll support you and then they don't...we get disappointed. Because trust is important in relationships. So it's important to us that they keep their word just as much as we keep our word. That way we can trust them when we need them most.

In our Gospel reading for today, we don't hear about just anyone keeping their word, we hear that Jesus kept the Word of God. Because it's not about keeping our word as followers of Christ, but rather keeping the Word of God. And for us to have integrity in doing so, we need to put our faith and trust, not in ourselves or some other person, but rather in the One we can trust completely.

The Jews in the temple that day believed in God the Father, but not in Jesus. They didn't understand who He was so He told them that He had come from God. Still, they didn't believe Him or what He had to say to them. That's when He said that the reason they couldn't hear Him speak the words of God was because they were no longer of God. And so, in our text, we hear them ask Him if He was a Samaritan with a demon who was terrorizing them because He believed differently. But Jesus replied, ***"I do not have a demon, but I honor my Father and you dishonor me. Yet, I do not seek my own glory; there is One who seeks it, and He is the judge. Truly, truly, I say to you, if***

***anyone keeps my word, he will never see death.***" (John 8:49-51)

Today there are still many people who see Jesus differently. While they might believe that He was a great teacher or prophet, others think differently and believe that Christianity terrorizes mankind. So they hold on to a certain hostility toward Christianity. They claim that Jesus and His followers don't have integrity and are hypocritical. They don't believe in the Word of God and believe that Christianity is a hoax. They believe that Christianity brings judgment and condemnation into the world instead of peace with God. They're not just indifferent, because like us, apart from our faith we're all spiritual enemies of God. (Romans 5:10)

In his lifetime, a bishop in the early church by the name of Athanasius tried his best to be faithful and help the church keep God's Word. For years, many believed that he was the author of one of the three ecumenical creeds that define Christianity. It was written for the church that those who heard the word of God might have a right understanding of who God is. And it has also been found to help to guard against the heresy of Arianism - the false belief that the Son of God DIDN'T always exist, and because, as we profess, He was begotten by God the Father. That somehow, God the Father/God the Son/God the Spirit AREN'T co-eternal or of the SAME essence. In other words, the heresy of Arianism denies the existence of the Trinity, meaning three in one.

While the word "Trinity" isn't explicitly used in the bible, if you read Genesis 1:26, God says, ***"Let us make man in our image, in our likeness..."*** In Genesis 3:22, He says ***"...man has now become like one of us, knowing good and evil."*** In Genesis 11:7, when He also says, ***"Come, let us go down and confuse their language so they will not understand each other."*** And yet, even in our Gospel for today, Jesus also makes it clear that

He is God because He says ***“Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am.”*** (John 8:58)

Those who heard Jesus say that would’ve recalled the time when Moses asked God by what name He wanted to be called....God said, ***“I AM WHO I AM.”*** (Genesis 3:14) And when Moses began preaching to the Israelites, he explained to them, that ***“I Am has sent me to you.”*** And yet, Jesus says, ***“Before Abraham was, I am.”***

He said this to let them know that He is both God and man. He is the Son of God and yet co-eternal with the Father and the Spirit. While this isn’t always easy to understand, by the power of the Holy Spirit, we come to understand that the only way to God the Father is through faith in His Son, Jesus Christ...they are One.

Abraham believed and trusted in this promise. So much so that He rejoiced and was glad that someday God’s Messiah, or Christ, would come. And even though Abraham lived some two thousand years before Christ, he believed and trusted in this promise so much that it was as if he saw it come about himself. That’s why God credited it to him as righteousness (Genesis 15:6), and why St. Paul would write later in Romans 4:16 that Abraham is the father of our faith. Not in the physical sense, the way that the Jews believed – who are under the law - but in the spiritual sense, by grace through faith.

It’s through the Spirit of God that we come to know that God’s Word offers us promises that are priceless. And not only do we come to know that Jesus is the Son of God, co-eternal with the Father, but we also come to know His love for us. For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life. (John 3:16)

It was His Spirit in our Epistle reading that motivated Peter to speak out. He believed and was motivated to speak with

integrity when Peter shared that Jesus was delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God. (Acts 2:23) And ***“God raised Him up, loosing the pangs of death, because it was not possible for him to be held by it.”*** (Acts 2:24)... And so, it’s through His Spirit that we come to trust in His Word that promises to us eternal life. To know that Jesus came, honored, and gloried the Father perfectly on our behalf.

God’s great love for us helps us to understand that even though we might struggle with sorrow and sadness in our lives, God has already taken our eternal welfare into account. And that through Him, by grace through faith, we might have integrity, and keep His Word in our lives. That in the end, we might truly worship Him – God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit – both now and always.

In Jesus’ name, Amen.