

Feast of the Holy Trinity
John 3:1-17
Hymns: 501, 116, 271, 330, 287, 643.

Introit: Psalm 29.

P Give to the LORD, you heavenly beings,
C **give to the LORD glory and strength!**
P Give to the LORD the glory due to His name!
C **Worship the LORD in holy splendour!**
P The voice of the LORD is over the waters.
C **The God of glory causes it to thunder.**
P The LORD is over many waters.
C **The voice of the LORD is powerful.**
P The voice of the LORD is majestic.
C **The voice of the LORD breaks the cedars.**
P The LORD shatters the cedars of Lebanon.
C **He makes Lebanon skip about like a calf.**
P He makes Sirion skip about like a young wild ox.
C **The voice of the LORD flashes out with flames of fire.**
P The voice of the LORD makes the wilderness tremble.
C **The LORD makes the Wilderness of Kadesh tremble.**
P The voice of the LORD causes the fallow deer to be in labour, and strips the forest bare.
C **In His temple everyone is saying, "Glory!"**
P The LORD sat enthroned over the Deluge,
C **and the LORD has for ever been sitting as King.**
P The LORD will give strength to His people.
All The LORD will bless His people with peace.

Collect: Almighty and ever lasting God, You have given us Grace to acknowledge the glory of the eternal Trinity by the confession of a true faith and to worship the Unity in the power of the Divine Majesty. Keep us steadfast in this faith and defend us from all adversities; for You, O Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, live and reign, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

The Preface

Who with Thee and the Holy Spirit is One God, one Lord, and in the confession of the only true God we worship Thee, the incomprehensible Trinity, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Therefore with angels...

Old Testament: Isaiah 6:1-8.

Epistle: Acts 2:14a, 22-36.

Gospel: John 3:1-17.

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

The text for the sermon is the Gospel heard before, John 3:1-17.

1 There was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. 2 He came to Jesus by night and said to Him, "Rabbi, we know that You have come from God as a teacher. For no one can do these miraculous signs, which You are doing, unless God is with him."

3 Jesus answered him, "Truly, truly, I tell you, unless anyone is born from above, he cannot see the kingdom of God."

4 Nicodemus asked Him, "How can a man be born when he is old? He cannot enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born, can he?"

5 Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I tell you, unless anyone is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. 6 What has been born of the sinful human nature is sinful human nature, but what has been born of the Spirit is spirit. 7 Do not be astonished that I have told you, 'You people must be born from above!' 8 The wind blows where it pleases and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know where it is coming from or where it is going. So is everyone who has been born of the Spirit." 9 Nicodemus answered Him, "How can these things be?" 10 Jesus answered him, "Are you the teacher of Israel without knowing these things? 11 Truly, truly, I tell you, We speak what We know and We

testify to what We have seen, and you people do not accept Our testimony. 12 If I have told you people earthly things and you do not believe, how will you believe if I tell you heavenly things? 13 No one has gone up into heaven except the One who has come down from heaven, the Son of Man. 14 As Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, 15 so that everyone who believes in Him may have eternal life. 16 For God so loved the world that He gave His only Son, so that everyone who believes in Him might not perish but have eternal life. 17 For God has not sent His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world may be saved through Him.

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us in your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear Friends in Christ,

Peace be with you.

This morning we once again heard how Nicodemus came to Jesus by night. Once again we have the opportunity to realize that there were some honest Pharisees - these men were eager to hear and consider Jesus in an honest and fair way. Nicodemus had heard of the miraculous signs and the teachings. He knew that Jesus was no ordinary rabbi. He was ready to hear Jesus and consider His teachings. Nicodemus' greeting indicates that Nicodemus thought of Jesus as a man of God. In time, the Holy Spirit would convince Nicodemus that Jesus actually is God.

Jesus responded to Nicodemus by telling him that the Kingdom of God comes by way of a new birth. **3 Jesus answered him, "Truly, truly, I tell you, unless anyone is born from above, he cannot see the kingdom of God."** There are several thoughts that pop into our minds of birth when we hear Jesus say this.

Birth is an activity that is totally passive for the person being born. Two years before birth, a person does not even exist. His or her parents may not even know each other. He or she has no choice as to how his or her parents meet, or how or when they come together. When the pregnancy comes to full term, the baby does not crawl out of the womb, but is pushed out by the mother.

Same with our entry into the Kingdom of God it's also a process that is totally passive on our part. We cannot choose by ourselves to enter the Kingdom of God. Instead, the Holy Spirit that calls us into the Kingdom of God by the Gospel.

Birth also introduces every person to an entirely new existence. Food and oxygen no longer come through the umbilical cord. Instead a person must suddenly eat and breathe. The body no longer floats around in a warm, protective fluid. Now there is gravity and the air is colder.

Our entry into the Kingdom of God introduces every person to an entirely new existence. We are now part of the body of Christ. We now have eternal life in Him.

Nicodemus struggled with the idea of being born into the Kingdom of God. **Nicodemus asked Him, "How can a man be born when he is old? He cannot enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born, can he?"** With these words Nicodemus confesses that he doesn't understand. It's as if he said, "Jesus, You are using the idea of birth in a strange, new way. I don't understand."

5 Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I tell you, unless anyone is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. 6 What has been born of the sinful human nature is sinful human nature, but what has been born of the Spirit is spirit. With these words, Jesus teaches that there is a fundamental difference between the birth that brings us into this world and the birth that brings us into the Kingdom of God.

Jesus continued to work with Nicodemus by revealing the cause of the problem. Jesus said to him, **"Are you the teacher of Israel without knowing these things? 11 Truly, truly, I tell you, We speak what We know and We testify to what We have seen, and you people do not accept Our testimony."** Nicodemus doesn't understand because he resists the testimony of Jesus and the prophets who came before Him. The teachings of Moses, the writings of the prophets, and the psalms all point forward to the Messiah. As a Pharisee, Nicodemus has most of these writings memorized, he has even taught on them, but he has not received them. Nicodemus struggles with the teaching of the Holy Spirit because He has not received the main teaching of God's Word.

Jesus compared His teaching about the new birth to the wind. Jesus continued and said, **8 The wind blows where it pleases and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know where it is coming from or where it is going. So is everyone who has been born of the Spirit.**” Even today, with our weather forecasting technology, we don’t always get it right. Any meteorologist will tell you that there is still a lot about the weather that we don’t understand. So with these words, Jesus is telling Nicodemus that he doesn’t need to understand the new birth any more than he understands the blowing of the wind. It’s enough to believe that the Holy Spirit provides the new birth as the entry into the Kingdom of God.

Nicodemus can’t keep up with Jesus. He is honest enough to admit his confusion by asking, **“How can these things be?”** Although this question indicates the confusion of Nicodemus, it also indicates the respect Nicodemus had for Jesus. Rather than surrender to his confusion in frustration and leave, he continues to trust Jesus to teach him.

Remember, Jesus continued to work with Nicodemus by revealing the cause of the problem. Jesus answered him, **“10 Jesus answered him, “Are you the teacher of Israel without knowing these things? 11 Truly, truly, I tell you, We speak what We know and We testify to what We have seen, and you people do not accept Our testimony.”** Nicodemus doesn’t understand because he resists the testimony of Jesus and the prophets who came before Him. The teachings of Moses, the writings of the prophets, and the psalms all point forward to the Messiah. As a Pharisee, Nicodemus has most of these writings memorized, he has even taught on them, but he has not received them. Nicodemus struggles with the teaching of the Holy Spirit because He has not received the main teaching of God’s Word.

Jesus then proceeded to give Nicodemus the central teaching of the Bible. He continued and said, **“13 No one has gone up into heaven except the One who has come down from heaven, the Son of Man. 14 As Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, 15 so that everyone who believes in Him may have eternal life.** With these words, Jesus identified the Son of Man as the Son of God Who descended from heaven and took on the flesh of man in order to become the Son of Man. He then stated that this very same Son of Man will be raised up on a cross just as Moses raised up the serpent in the wilderness. The result of the work that the Son of Man does on the cross will be that all who believe in Him will have eternal life.

Jesus then went on to proclaim what many people call the “Gospel in a Nutshell.” He said, **“16 For God so loved the world that He gave His only Son, so that everyone who believes in Him might not perish but have eternal life. 17 For God has not sent His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world may be saved through Him.”** With these words, Jesus teaches that God shows His love toward us by sending His only begotten Son into the world in order to save the world from sin. The mission of the Son is not to condemn the world, but to save it.

So Jesus was teaching Nicodemus that all human beings are born of the flesh. This means that we are all conceived and born sinful and are under the power of the devil until Christ claims us as His own. We would be lost forever unless delivered from sin, death, and everlasting condemnation. But the Father of all mercy and grace has sent His Son Jesus Christ, who atoned for the sin of the whole world that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.

The reason Nicodemus had such trouble believing in the new birth of water and the Spirit is that he was concentrating so hard on the law contained in the teachings of Moses, the writings of the prophets, and the psalms that he had not noticed the Gospel in those writings. He did not receive the good news that the promised Messiah would not come to condemn the world, but to save it. Since he had not received the testimony of the salvation worked by God, he could not deal with the new birth into the family of God.

We can give praise to Almighty God that Nicodemus eventually did receive the testimony of God’s Holy Scriptures. We know that he eventually became a Christian because the account of him in today’s Gospel isn’t the last time we read of him in Holy Scripture. We hear of him one last time shortly after Jesus died on the cross. **After these things Joseph of Arimathea, who was a disciple of Jesus, but secretly for fear of the Jews, asked Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus, and Pilate gave him permission. So he came and took away his body. Nicodemus also, who earlier had come to Jesus by night, came bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about seventy-five pounds in weight.** [John 19:38–39] It’s so interesting that it’s a couple of Pharisees who supervise the burial of Jesus in the tomb.

The account of Jesus and Nicodemus can teach us a great deal on this Trinity Sunday. Jesus taught that God shows His love for us by sending His only begotten Son into the world in order to save the world. He taught that, like the serpent in the wilderness, the Son would be raised up on a cross in order to save the world from sin. He taught that the Holy Spirit gives the gifts of salvation to us by giving us a new birth into the family of God. The struggle of Nicodemus shows us that if we reject the work of any one of the members of the Trinity, we reject them all. On the other hand, when the Holy Spirit brings us into the family of God by the new birth, we receive all the blessings that our gracious Triune God has for us - including forgiveness, salvation, and eternal life. We have indeed been blessed by

God the Father's grace for

God the Son's sake through

God the Holy Spirit's gift of faith. **Amen**

The peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

Amen.

3rd Hymn: 271

Prayer of the Church The Holy Trinity 2018.

P Because the Holy Trinity has shown mercy to us and promises to hear and interpret our prayers, let us call on Him for us and for all people.

Brief Silence,

P Holy, Holy, Holy, are You, O Lord God Almighty; the whole earth is full of Your glory. You created us and all the world, yet more wonderfully You have fully given Yourself to redeem Your fallen creatures. We praise You for Your great mercy. Defend Your Holy Church throughout the world that she would remain in Your salvation and faithfully confess You, the Only true God, who loved the world by sending Your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ into our flesh. Lord in your mercy.....

C hear our prayer.

P No one knows You, Father, unless he knows Christ Jesus and no one has faith without the Holy Spirit. Encourage and strengthen our pastors and congregations, and all Your baptized believers that they may joyfully proclaim the eternal kingdom of Your Son. Lead bright, caring, faithful workers in Your kingdom to serve as pastors, teachers, and church officials. Bless all the congregations of the AELC with harmony in Your truth and with love toward one another. Lord in Your mercy....

C hear our prayer.

P In this broken world of pain, sin, and death, You, O Lord, are our only Comforter. - Give eternal life as Christ promised through the new birth of water and the Holy Spirit in Holy Baptism. - Use fathers and mothers, Sunday School Teachers, godparents, and all the faithful to encourage the baptized to remain in the joyful confession of their new life in Your Holy Name and thus have life forever. Lord in You mercy....

C hear our prayer

P Uphold those in earthly authority, especially our State and Federal Governments. - Lead them to reflect Your Divine love by defending the unborn, the infirm, and the aged. - O Lord of the army of angels, guard and defend our armed forces and their families. - Sustain the commerce, industry, and agriculture of our land, and cause us to receive Your abundant earthly gifts with thanksgiving. Lord in Your mercy...

C hear our prayer.

P Merciful God, look with compassion on those who are depressed, troubled, ill, injured, recovering, awaiting surgery, or undergoing tests (*including* _____). Give healing according to Your good and gracious will. Use us to bring the light of Your word to them. Lord in Your mercy....

C hear our prayer

P God of love, drive out our selfishness and smallness of heart. - Through the Word of forgiveness and the feast of Christ's body and blood, fill us with love for our neighbours—especially those who are poor, hungry, homeless, and unemployed. - Bless all who serve those distressed under great burdens, that they may be rescued from them by Your comfort. Lord in Your mercy.....

C hear our prayer.

P O Holy Triune God, You have eternally lived in harmony and concord. - Receive our thanks for all who are with You in heaven and cheer all who mourn with the promise of Your eternal feast. To You, O Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, be praise and honour, now and forever.

C Amen.

4th Hymn: 330