

Trinity 1, 2016
Who is Your Jesus?
Matthew 7: 13-14, 21-29
St. Andrew's Church – Jacksonville, Or
By Rev. Mr. Bill Baker

“Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven...many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And I will profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.” (Matthew 7: 21-23)

These are very powerful words that need to be shouted from the rooftops because the Church today is becoming a movement of self-seekers trying to find what's good for them by their own standards; a type of Christian Relativism where individuals are creating their own forms of Christianity. As this continues, church becomes less important, and may be the reason for the massive decline in church attendance today; and once Christian morality is replaced by secularism the moral foundations of society will crumble.

Today's sermon may be difficult for some to hear...especially for those who feel church is unnecessary. The Bible and me mentality is a very dangerous path to be on. Proper worship and an understanding of church doctrine is essential to staying on the right path. The church may not be perfect but it at least has a checks and balances in the forms of creeds, councils and traditions that protect the Gospel truth from old heresies resurrecting under new names and from new heresies provoked by ever changing societal values.

As we enter the Trinity season you can expect to hear much concerning the activity of the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost. This, after all is the foundation of Christianity. It is interesting to note that of all the religions in the world it is Christianity that would cease to exist if its founder were removed. Christianity is the only religion that worships it's King and not just a way of life. Of all the other religions not one leader has risen from the dead, walked among us and ascended. So Jesus becomes the most important figure that mankind will ever

encounter...and it is what we do with Jesus...how we see Him...that makes all the difference.

So today, being the First Sunday in the season of Trinity, we are going to take our first steps into understanding who Jesus is and how he fits into the Trinity and what that means for each of us. Now this can be some very dangerous ground since so many misconceptions are out there; so many preconceived notions from backyard theologians and workplace theists. But if you don't get the Trinity right then you don't get Jesus right; and if you don't get Jesus right, well...your future may be warm...but not so bright.

From our Gospel reading today it is revealed to us that not every one who says the words "Lord, Lord" will end up in heaven. This should make anyone shudder who believes they don't need the church to stay on the right path. As I entered the church in my latter years I realized a dramatic difference in the way I wanted to believe in contrast to what I found to be true from within the church. It is so important to heed the words of the Gospel of Matthew for they point us in the right direction; *"Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it"* (Matthew 7:13-14).

For those of us sitting here today this is easy stuff...we know that the straight and narrow way that leads to everlasting life is Jesus Christ and He organized the Apostles to set up His kingdom on earth that we may become the children of God and living members of His body. So I want to continue today by eliminating some current misconceptions that distort the truth of who Jesus is.

In the verses we have heard today, we have evidence that there will be those professing what they think is truth but are, in reality, leading masses away from the Gospel of Christ. We all have a desire to seek after Christ and enter the Kingdom of Heaven, but I hope your idea of getting through the gate is not a reenactment of the masses at Christmas barging through the doors of Wal-Mart to get that good deal ahead of any one who might get in your way. It's been 2000 years...by our standards I don't think Jesus is in a hurry. But we must be vigilant to

walk the right path that leads through the narrow gate...it requires patience, commitment, sacrifice, contentment, love, hope to enter blissfully through the gate of Jesus Christ.

So what are some of the modern day deceptions and where do they get it wrong? Well, there are two ways to destroy the Gospel; by addition too or by subtraction from. For instance, have you heard of the Faith Movement? This is a group that would seek to convince us that Jesus and His disciples were rich; that to be poor or sick is a sin due to our lack of faith in God. The Faith Movement holds that Jesus did not function as God while on earth but, through His faith was able to work through the Holy Spirit as a man not as God. They get Jesus wrong by denying the equality between Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The Faith Movement continues to say that since **we** also have the Holy Spirit, as Jesus did, then we too can be as Jesus was if we exhibit enough faith. So good faith brings a good life and bad faith a bad life...we are ultimately in control. If they are correct in this assumption and Jesus was good beyond measure...why was he then tortured and crucified? The Jesus of the Faith Movement is not a Jesus that dies for sins or conquers death but only an example of what we can be once we attain enough faith.

Our next deception is found in the New Age Movement where we get a form of Pantheism in which all of creation is part of the whole and the eternal process is part of the eternal now. God is transcendent and we are just manifestations...God is light and we are part of the light. The Holy Trinity is denied, Christ's death and resurrection are denied and the virgin birth is denied. By all this it would seem that salvation is not possible or even necessary since we are all simply a part of the 'impersonal all' and have no real purpose. Since there is no biblical support for the New Age movement one must rely on the varying views of modern day theists professing their own way through the Wide Gate.

And I'll just do one more so that we can get to the truth of who Jesus is.

Have you ever come across the term Scripturalism? Gordon Clark, a Presbyterian, Philosophy teacher and Calvinist, sided with the Nestorian view of the identity of Christ, claiming that Christ was really two persons. Scripturalism emphasizes the disunity of the human and divine natures of Christ. According to the Nestorians, the nature of

Christ is divided equally between His divine nature and His human nature, but the two are distinct and separate.

This idea is not scriptural, for we know from the Gospel of John that, *“In the beginning was the WORD, and the WORD was with God, and the WORD was God.”*(John 1:1). The WORD, being Jesus Christ, is God and since God is one-hundred percent divine that makes Jesus one-hundred percent divine. The orthodox Christian doctrine of the ‘hypostatic union’ states that Christ’s one nature was fully God and fully man. God the Son, Jesus Christ, took on our human nature, yet remained fully God at the same time.” At the Incarnation Jesus became one of us, *“And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth”*(John 1:14). Notice that nothing was subtracted from His divinity but that our humanity was added to it.

And Jesus had always been God: In John chapter 8 *“Jesus said unto them, verily, verily, I say unto you, before Abraham was, I am”*(John 8:58); and in chapter 10 verse 30 of the same Gospel *“I and my Father are one.* The scriptures are clear on who Jesus is...Jesus is the WORD of GOD made FLESH...this is how the Almighty reveals Himself to us that we might understand the TRUTH and our distortion of it; and once we can see the light of truth He shows us that by putting our faith in Jesus we can find forgiveness, overcome our weaknesses and find eternal life!

So, we have the Almighty reaching down in love and walking with us according to our own nature in the person of Jesus Christ...that’s wonderful!...but...how do we fit into the picture of being one body with Him? We discovered through His Ascension, that Jesus must go to the Father that he might send the comforter. And it wasn’t until Pentecost that we began to understand the significance of this move by the Almighty...The Almighty God Himself, Father of all creation, becomes the Word made flesh; the Word made flesh rises to the right hand of the Father only to come back to us in the Holy Spirit! And it is the Holy Spirit that enters the hearts and minds of mankind making us one in the body of Christ! God alone does all this descending and ascending, that we may ascend also...by becoming the children of God. The Holy Trinity is God...three independent sources, yet one essence...each fully God but yet distinct.

There have been many attempts to explain the concept of the Holy Trinity; water, ice, and steam; three separate elements from the same source...sounds good...but this fails because they cannot each exist simultaneously. How about being a father, a son and a deacon? This too sounds like a good definition but still fails the test. I may be all three but I cannot occupy these roles equally at the same moment. St. Patrick's shamrock probably does one of the better jobs in illustrating the oneness of the Holy Trinity but I think there may be another way that goes a little deeper.

Focus your attention on a scroll, like that found in the book Revelation where we read; *"And the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together; and every mountain and island were moved out of their places"* (Revelation 6:14). The Scroll in the scriptures is a powerful picture...who is able to open it? So, if we use this as a metaphore for the Holy Trinity we could see the scroll as God the Father on which Word of God (the Son) is revealed unto mankind while the ingested Word is the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit making us the children of God. Take the scroll away and you have nothing...take the words away and you have no revelation...take the enlightenment (the understanding) away and you have no faith. The three are equal in power and of the same essence, in harmony of purpose.

The Holy Trinity is the heart, soul and basic doctrine of Christianity. We go to the Father by the merits of the Son Jesus Christ as we are enabled by the Holy Ghost being simultaneously in communion with the three persons of the Holy Trinity.

May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all (2 Cor. 13:14).

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.