



11500 West 20th Avenue
Lakewood, Colorado 80215
303-238-2482 (Fax 303 238 2337)

www.soth.net

contact us at mail@soth.net

9:00 a.m. Christian Education

10:00 a.m. Worship

Children's Sunday School during Worship



"One God, Three Persons"

Romans 5:1-5

Rev. Ron Holmes

30, 2010



Look up the word "Trinity" in the Bible...and you won't find it. Nowhere in all the Scriptures is that word used. Pull out your Strong's Exhaustive Concordance which lists every location in Scripture of every word used in the Bible...can you imagine the life's work that this took...there's even page after page for the word "and" and "it." Strong's Exhaustive Concordance is appropriately named because hauling it around will make one strong and can be exhausting (its name comes from its author, , and it is exhaustive in that it is a complete and thorough listing). But, pull out your Strong's Exhaustive Concordance, turn to the letter "t" section and look for the word "Trinity" (go ahead, I'll wait while you get your Strong's out). You won't find it. That's because it's not there. The word "Trinity" is never used.

So, on this "Trinity Sunday" as we consider the centrality of the "Trinity" to Christian faith...what are we doing? Why do we have such a theology if the word is never used in Scripture? The answer is that while the word, "Trinity," is never used in Scripture, the idea of "Trinity" runs throughout the Bible. The doctrine of the Trinity grew out of an examination of how we experience God and what Scripture teaches and leads us to believe about that experience.

Now, first of all, we must acknowledge that all expressions of the experience are inadequate. All attempts to describe the Trinity in some understandable way are imperfect—they have flaws, or loopholes, or questions around which one could pick at forever. Which is why I especially liked the quote on the bulletin cover for today: *"Explain the Trinity? We can't even begin. We can only accept it—a mystery disclosed in Scripture. It should be no surprise that the triune Being of God baffles our finite minds. We should be surprised, rather, if we could understand the nature of our Creator. He would be a two-bit deity, not the fathomless source of all reality,"* (Vernon Grounds, emphasis his). That pretty much sums up the issue. Yet, while we cannot fully understand the "fathomless Source of all reality," we must strive to learn and comprehend as much as we can.

As Grounds says, the Trinity is "a mystery disclosed in Scripture." While the word, Trinity, is never used, it is a concept that runs through all of Scripture. The questions begin—and the examination begins—as early as Genesis 1:26, "*Let us make human beings in our image, in our likeness...*" Jesus speaks to the Trinity and gives us the Trinitarian formula for baptism in the Great Commission, "*Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,*" (Matthew 28:19). There are also strong Trinity images in the section of the Gospel of John known as the Upper Room Discourse. One sections, John 14:15-31, which my Bible titles "Jesus Promises the Holy Spirit," includes such statements from Jesus as "*And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever—the Spirit of truth,*" (John 14:16, 17a), and, "*But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you,*" (John 14:26). Later, in that same Upper Room Discourse, which my Bible titles "The Work of the Holy Spirit," Jesus says, "*When the Advocate comes, whom I will send to you from the Father—the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father—he will testify about me,*" (John 15:26). Then, of course, there are passages like our Scripture reading for today which, in a short paragraph, invoke images of all three Persons of the Trinity, "*...we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ...because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit,*" (Romans 5:1, 5). Those passages—and many, many others—lead to a doctrine of the Trinity: One God, Three Persons, or three manifestations of the one God experienced by us in our relationship with Him.

All attempts to explain that fall short in one way or another. They can be helpful, but none of them are perfect. There is Tertullian's explanation which you saw earlier during the Praise Team's song. Tertullian was an early Church leader—late 2nd and early 3rd centuries—who is known as the earliest Latin writer to use the term "Trinity" and the sense of one God, one "substance," but three persons. Tertullian's attempt at explaining the Trinity is not perfect, but perhaps helpful: "*It is the image of the Trinity as a plant, with the Father as a deep root, the Son as the shoot that breaks forth into the world, and the Spirit as that which spreads forth beauty and fragrance.*" Others have attempted to explain the Trinity through images of water (one "substance," H₂O, in three "forms"—solid, liquid and gas), or family relationships (one "person," Ron Holmes, but three "roles"—husband, father and son). Helpful toward understanding the doctrine of the Trinity, but not perfect...which they'll never be. Our finite minds cannot totally understand the "unfathomable Source of all reality." It's what Scripture leads us to conclude, but we can't fully explain or understand it. We accept it as a matter of faith and recognition of our finite minds.

More important than trying to fully comprehend the nature of our Triune God, however, is understanding its meaning for us. There are many meanings, but two basic yet profound implications of the Trinity for us are (1) God desires a relationship with us, and, (2) God is the initiator of that relationship.

First of all, God desires a relationship with us. As incredible as that may sound, God—the Creator of the universe—desires a relationship with us. The image of the Trinity is one of relationship and fellowship—"Let us make human beings in our image." Within the Godhead there is relationship and fellowship and God's desire to create us in His image is also an expression of relationship and fellowship. So, first there is that, God desires a relationship with us.

Then, secondly, it is God who initiates that relationship. We may seek God and God responds, but it is God who has initiated the relationship in the first place. We were created for fellowship with the Triune God and it is God, by His creative power, who initiates that. And the Bible describes people of various times and places and their fellowship with God, all initiated by God. So, for example, human beings have had fellowship with God...in a walk in the Garden (Adam and Eve), through a call to a new land and the promise of blessing (Abraham...and about which we'll have more to say next week), a burning bush (Moses), a quiet whisper (Elijah), a Damascus Road (Paul), and the ultimate expression

of that fellowship with God, Jesus Christ. Emmanuel. God with us. God desires a relationship with us...and it is God who initiates that effort at relationship. Which is why, by the way, we baptize infants. Or, at least one reason why. We don't initiate the relationship with God. The relationship is not based on our ability to claim it or seek it. It is initiated by God...and what better image of that than an infant entering into that relationship through baptism.

That is the good news of the Trinity for us today. Even though we can't fully comprehend it—which I also find to be good news because, otherwise, God would be a "two-bit deity," or, even worse, I'd probably make myself God if I could fully comprehend the one, Triune God. The good news of the Trinity for us today is that it reveals God's desire for a relationship with us, and that desire is so strong that God initiates the relationship. Those are amazing truths to consider. And something we should be very excited about.

Imagine with me, for a moment that...Todd Helton was to come to my door, knock on it and, when Kim answered the door, say, "Can Ron come out and play?" Or...John Elway...knock on the door, Kim answers, "Would Ron like to toss the football around for awhile?" Or...Chauncey Billups...knock on the door..."Want to shoot some hoops?" Create your own fantasy scenario. In my fantasy, Todd Helton not only knocks on my door and asks if I can come out and play, but I accept and tell Todd, "And I might even let you win today." But, imagine the excitement of such a trio coming to my house and initiating a relationship with me. But, guess what, those guys are not God...no matter what some might think! Yet, it is none other than Almighty God, the one, true God, the Great I Am, the Creator of the universe, the Triune God—Father, Son and Holy Spirit—who knocks on your door, desiring and seeking a relationship with you.

Let's pause for some Silent Reflection on our response to God's call to be in relationship with Him.