



Holy Trinity Sunday
15 June 2025

Ascension Lutheran Church
Rev. Christian W. Marien

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

It is Holy Trinity Sunday. Which ranks right up there with that special Sunday in March where we lose an hour of sleep. I do my best to schedule Pastor Tony to preach this Sunday every year, but somehow this one snuck by me. There will be pastors in lots of churches who will try to explain the mystery of the Trinity. They will pull out chocolate chip cookies – to explain flour, chocolate chips, and butter; or apples to separate skin, flesh, and core; or even ice cubes – to distinguish ice, water, and steam - in an attempt to explain how God is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. One God – three persons. The Holy Trinity. And almost all of them will fail miserably. On this Sunday, as we celebrate the communal nature of God – there is something to be said for leaving some sense of mystery to the identity of God. Mainly because, those created by God, are never going to be able to accurately understand the nature of the One, who is three, who created us – until we are face-to-face and fully wrapped in the presence of God that we might finally comprehend. For now, I am content, as pastor, to offer you the description Jesus leaves with us at the end of the book of Matthew: Go into the world and baptize in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. I have no interest in changing the identity of God the trinity to creator, redeemer, sustainer because time and time again we are reminded that to use this language limits the participation of each person of the Trinity. God the Father both creates and redeems. God the Son both redeems and creates. God the Holy Spirit both creates and sustains. And all three do the one other thing that I did not mention. You see what happens? In trying to explain we suffer the loss of the actual identity of the power of God – when we limit one person of the Trinity to only one act. And if you are still with me at this point – good job. Moving on.

Today, we find Jesus praying – in the upper room, at the Last Supper, again. Because – the reading from John seems to fit with the celebration of the Trinity. God the Son is praying to God the Father about the coming of God the Holy Spirit. And as he prays, Jesus is teaching the disciples and us that when God the Holy Spirit comes, the spirit will guide us into “all the truth.” Hallelujah! Not just some of the truth or the most important part of the truth about God, but ALL THE TRUTH. Now, don’t you feel better. Jesus goes on to say that God the Holy Spirit will declare to you the things that are to come. It is not a request that Jesus makes in this prayer – it is a declaration of what God the Holy Spirit will bring to the world. What I do appreciate about this moment, today, is that the prayer Jesus prays about the coming of the Holy Spirit is connected to the reading from the book of Romans in the New Testament. “Therefore, since we are justified by faith.” My God, we can’t get any more Lutheran than that. If you are old Lutheran or new Lutheran – or just dipping your toe into the water of Lutheran Christianity – this is your moment. When Martin Luther was struggling with the “whys” of the mother Catholic church, these words from Romans, Chapter 5 hit him right between the eyes. No longer did Luther believe that his “works” or “acts of service” would help him stand before God or get him into heaven. But only by God’s grace would any of us enter into the Kingdom of Heaven. And that my friends is the end of the story. If you walk away today with nothing else – that is all you need. You are justified by grace through faith. If Luther had been around today – this would have been the moment of the impending mic drop as he walked away from the pulpit. But then, we would miss the power to come in verse 3 that stops me in my tracks.

“3 And not only that,” writes Paul, “but we also boast in our afflictions our suffering, knowing that suffering produces endurance, 4 and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, 5 and hope does not put us to shame, because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us.” For all of the verses people might memorize and quote from the bible, this one never seems to get enough airtime even as we find ourselves living these exact words Paul writes to the early Christians in Rome. Suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame or in another translation, hope does not disappoint us.

What I know of the world today is the deep hunger of many to be reminded of this very truth. Right after Easter, I found myself in a restaurant in Minneapolis. Nothing was out of the ordinary. The restaurant was not very big or very busy. We were ushered into a back corner table past several other open tables in the middle of the restaurant. Our server was a young man who was easy to talk to and as I usually do, I asked the server his name. He told us his name was Taylor and offered us menus and said he would be back with water. He came back, provided the waters, and proceeded to tell us the specials and remind us that Happy Hour pricing would only last another 7 minutes. We ordered drinks and appetizers,



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and away Taylor went. The restaurant sat a couple next to our table and I apologized immediately for how loud we might be as dinner progressed. They laughed and told us no problem. So, I asked them their names. I found out they were celebrating an anniversary. I asked them what their favorites were on the menu much to the pain of the other dinner guests at my own table. And after our appetizers arrived and their appetizers arrived, I asked them which one they liked best and offered them a bite of ours. Taylor came back and took our order for dinner. We ate dinner and decided on dessert. I ordered dessert and Taylor told me to order the Tres Leches cake instead because it was bigger and better. I laughed and said, do you have extra back there, and he told us the wait staff got to eat the edges off the cake pan after the center pieces were cut. I told him to bring two and then to sit down and join us. The couple next to us asked if I had eaten that dessert before, I said no – but it was Tres Leches cake – I had made it before – it must be good. So, they ordered one too. Taylor came back with the three pieces of cake – two for our table and one for our new friends celebrating their anniversary and then to my great surprise and everyone else’s at our table – he sat down. He asked me my name and then asked why I was so friendly with everyone. For the next thirty minutes, we talked about why we were in town, how long he had worked at the restaurant, what I did for a living, how long the couple next to us had been married, and then I asked him what his plans were for the future. My exact question was, “How are you planning on contributing to the universe?”

And he stopped – “I don’t know,” he said. And I looked him straight in the eye and said, “well, I am going to pray for you every day until I come back to Minneapolis in October and then I am coming back here to check on you.” There was a look of shock on his face. “Really?” he said. And my friend sitting next to me said, “I know you just met Chris tonight, but if he said he will pray for you, he is really going to pray for you.” He looked at me and said, “In my whole life, no one has ever said they would pray for me.” Well, Taylor, that changes tonight. This twenty something young man wasn’t looking for a pastor. I was just simply looking for good tacos. God had something else in mind. Suffering produces endurance, endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not disappoint us.

Tell me of the Taylors you know in this life, who simply need to be reminded that God knows their name – that they have not been forgotten or written off or regarded as unworthy of God’s love and attention. I know several – Jason, who struggled with depression through most of his life, even as he was deeply loved by family and friends, opened his eyes to the hand of our Savior waiting to lead him home. Phyllis, before she died, needed to be reminded that she was loved and forgiven by a God who was waiting to meet her and welcome her home. A high school senior, who needed to be reminded that he was not destined to fail, but destined for so much more upon his graduation, when he might finally see himself the way God sees him. The migrant worker who picks our fruit; the immigrant who cleans our bathrooms, the refugee who assisted our military to overthrow their own unjust government in their home country who was brought to this country with gratitude but left to fend for themselves once settled; the undocumented member who will self-deport with dignity even as they have provided honest work, established a home, paid taxes all in hopes of a better life for their children. The cancer patient who enters into a fourth round of chemotherapy wondering why God allows this suffering – “have I not suffered enough,” she asks. Suffering produces endurance, endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not disappoint us.

Yes, I have met several Taylors in this life, though I have only met one actual Taylor that needed to be reminded God knew their name. All the rest had their own names and to each and every one of them I have said, “God knows your name, and you, my friend, are not alone.” I have prayed for Taylor every day since that Friday night in April and on Wednesday, October 22nd I plan on having good tacos while I catch up with a young man named Taylor when I visit the same restaurant and maybe even sit at the same table. And I will remind him, “God knows your name, and you, my friend, are not alone. So, tell me, “How are you planning on contributing to the universe?” To the rest of you, if you are feeling like Taylor today, then hear these words I speak to you. “God knows your name, and you, my friend, are not alone. The very nature of God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, is community. You, my friends, have never been alone. Amen.