

Goal: That the hearers recognize that they are commissioned confessors.

Today, we celebrate the mystery of the Holy Trinity. That the only God, the one true God, is 3 persons but 1 God. One essence, that is 3 distinct persons; Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, each 100% God, yet there are not 3 gods, but 1 God. It's a mystery that we attempt to verbalize in the Athanasian Creed. And although we try verbalize it, we can't explain how. It's a mystery, beyond our ability to comprehend or to even understand. Too large for our small minds to wrap around, too holy for our sinful minds to grasp. All we can do is simply speak the truth as God has revealed to us.

So, we can't explain one of the most essential and foundational truths of Christianity, only confess it. And some may make fun of us because of that. "*How can you believe in a God you can't even really explain?* Maybe the better question is, "*How can anyone believe in a god they can explain?*" Just imagine if we could fully understand and explain God, and contain Him in our minds, that would make us greater than God. Actually, that would make us god. And that's what Satan wants, so he mocks the idea of the Trinity and the mystery. And that's what our sinful minds want as well, that we would master god and control our own destiny. That's the dominant theology of our world today, fashioning a god and a belief system that we are most comfortable and that we can control ourselves. And if you are your own god, know that you cannot save yourself.

That is why today we confess the Biblical truth that God is uncreated, infinite, eternal, almighty, incomprehensible, and holy. He's everything we're not. And it is here that we gather in His presence; not to give, but to receive, not to do, but to rest; not to get information, but to worship. Because the true worship of God is not some intellectual or moral exercise, but it's to receive life from Him in the forgiveness of our sins. And our model today, is the prophet Isaiah.

"In the year that King Uzziah died (I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up; and the train of his robe filled the temple. Above him stood the seraphim. Each had six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. And one called to another and said: "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory!" (Isaiah 6: 1 – 3) Isaiah was given an amazing vision for a people who lived in a divided country, similar to ours today. Faithfulness to God was rare, as the majority engaged in things that God declared unholy and detestable. They worshipped false gods, including wealth, fame, power, and self-gratification. So, God provided a vision to remind them of Who He is and who we are.

First, Isaiah sees himself in the temple, God's temple in heaven. The Almighty is surrounded by seraphim, angels God created to serve Him and mankind. They have six wings, two covering their faces, two covering their feet, and two for flying. They sing, ***"Holy, holy, holy"*** and the truth about you and I is exposed. The Lord God Almighty is completely holy and without sin. The worshipers use God's special name, Yahweh, ***"The LORD of hosts."*** And this name reminds us that He is The Lord of all who loved and provided for His Old Testament Israel, and Who today also loves and provides for us.

But ***"Holy, holy, holy"*** tells us something else. This threefold repetition declares the Holy Trinity, three holy persons in one holy God. As the Athanasian Creed confessed, *"The Father is holy, the Son holy, and the Holy Spirit holy; and yet they are not three holies, but one holy."* In our worship we sing *"with angels and archangels and with all the company of heaven."*

But all of this is just too much for Isaiah! When Isaiah sees the Lord in His glory and the angels, he recognizes that he's far from holy. ***"I said: 'Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts!'"*** (Isaiah 6: 5) An "unclean" man can't stand before God. The people of the Old Testament knew this and they marveled whenever one saw God and lived. After Jacob wrestled with God one night, he marveled, ***"I have seen God face to face, and yet my life has been delivered"*** (Genesis 32:30). Even the seraphim cover their eyes with two wings before God. So, Isaiah's response is right on.

But what about you and me? How can the Lord claim us sinners His own children? Why would He want anything to do with failures like you and me, who sin, and continue to live in sin? The word is: Redemption! ***"Then one of the seraphim flew to me, having in his hand a burning coal that he had taken with tongs from the altar. And he touched my mouth and said: 'Behold, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away, and your sin atoned for.'"*** (Isaiah 6: 6 – 7) The altar is the place where sacrifices for sin were made. And the sacrifice was made for our sin on the altar of the Cross, and it is applied to us not with tongs and hot coal, but with water, with bread, with wine, and with the Word of God.

God initiates this redemption, not man! We're dead in our sins, but God comes to us. *"Your guilt is taken away and your sin atoned for."* Now, because each of us bears the righteousness and holiness of Jesus Christ, we can each now stand comfortably before the Holy Trinity; the One God is holy, holy, holy, and He makes us holy!

The Almighty, the Lord of Hosts has a question for you. (*And I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" Then I said, "Here I am! Send me." (Isaiah 6: 8) "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?"*) Did you catch that Trinity reference, "*who will go for us*"? The Lord God calls Isaiah, His newly reconciled servant, to do an eternally important task. Because of our new, redeemed relationship with the Lord and the abundant life we've received, He calls us too, "*Who will go for us*?" Isaiah hears God speaking, and he responds, "*Here am I! Send me.*" Do you hear God's Word that you are forgiven? He asks today, "*Who will be our servant and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in our name, the name of the Holy Trinity? Who will teach my children and instruct my people?*"

There's a story that after our Lord's Resurrection and Ascension, an angel spoke with Jesus. "*Now, Lord, can we go and tell the good news?*" The Lord said, "*No, I have sent my disciples to do this!*" The angel replied, "*How can we trust those sinners to get this Great news out to others? You know how many times they have botched things up. Why not send us angels! We've never failed! We'd gladly go with the Good News to accomplish the salvation of all the people on earth!*" Jesus said, "*No, it's now up to them! I have given them salvation.*" The angel went away very sad because he knew those people that Christ has entrusted with the Saving News. Jesus has sent us!

The Lord God has called you! He has forgiven you your sins, washing them in the blood of the Lamb. He has reconciled you to Himself through the sacrifice Christ gave for you on the cross. This is something we should always keep in mind as He calls us to serve Him where He has planted us.

Layton Ford explains the inconsistency that we Lutherans often live with. "*There are too many churches with impeccable credentials for orthodox theology whose outreach is almost nil. They are SOUND, but they are SOUND ASLEEP! Sadly, Grace and its people can be a holy huddle that almost never plays the game!*" What is God's will and plan for each of us here at Saint Mark? I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "*Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?*" I said, "*Here am I! Send me.*" I now serve as your pastor. It's God's plan that we be empowered by His Word and be moved by the Spirit to serve His Kingdom, to join the army of our God which marches out to do His will day by day. I say, "*Here am I! Send me.*" What will you say? Amen.