

Life in the Spirit, Three-in-One, 7/7/24

Chances are, we all have little unsolved mysteries in our families, maybe the story comes up when you all get together during the holidays and reminisce. One of those Keeler mysteries that my brothers would tell has to do with me. I was about to go into 3rd grade and it was time to get a new pair of shoes. And for whatever reason, a pair of purple LA Gear sneakers caught my eye. And my mom said, are you sure? And I said, yes, absolutely I love these. And so she bought them and I put them on thinking I was so cool and my older brothers just started laughing at me, what is on your feet? Immediately I started second guessing how cool these sneakers were. But my mom said, that's what you chose! Well, wouldn't you know it, about a week later, mysteriously one of my purple sneakers disappeared. We looked everywhere for it. No one, including me had any idea where it went, and so my mom had no choice but to buy me a new pair. A few years went by with this unsolved mystery, until it was time for my brother Jon and me to have our own bedrooms and get rid of the bunk bed, and as we are taking the mattresses off, in between the mattress and the boxspring the mysterious missing purple sneaker appears. And I swore to my parents, I didn't do it. To this day, everyone thinks I'm taking this lie to my grave, but I have no recollection of putting it there. It's a mystery that I will have to ask God about one day.

But the mystery that we are going to look at today is just a bit more significant than the case of the missing purple sneakers, it's a mystery about God. [Title Slide] how God reveals himself in the Bible as one God in three persons. Now I have a seminary degree and have been studying theology for over 20 years, and I still don't understand how God is three persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit and yet one God. Well you say, isn't this mystery a problem for our faith? Not for me. Actually it bolsters my faith because it demonstrates to me that no one made this up. In a million lifetimes if you were creating a new religion you would never come up with the Triune God of the Bible. No one would think of it, even if you thought of it you wouldn't put it out there. Now for some of us, I get it, that's unsettling...we want everything about God and our lives to make perfect logical sense and fit nicely into a theological box. But if your God is small enough for you to fully understand, I would argue that you don't have the God of the Bible. Eternity will be filled with aha moments as God reveal more about himself.

BUT! Until then, let me balance this- because God has revealed a good deal about who he is as Triune and it is worth our time to study...not as some dry intellectual exercise but because in understanding, it draws us to greater wonder and worship of God. And did you know that the great C.S. Lewis in Mere Christianity said that understanding the Trinity, "Matters more than anything in the world!" And we are going to see why he said that as we go. So here's what we want to do- I want you to hang with me for about 15 minutes while I take you to a seminary Class called "Trinitarianism 101." We want to look at what the Bible says about the Trinity, particularly as it relates to the Holy Spirit, whom we are studying this summer. And then we want to bring all that together and answer the question, what difference does this make in my life and your today?

Lesson #1 The Person of the Spirit

Lesson #2 The Deity of the Spirit

Lesson #3 The Trinity in the Bible

Lesson #1 The Person of the Spirit

In order to understand the Trinity we need to understand who the Holy Spirit is. I have heard even pastors say things like the Holy Spirit is the “wind” of God. But, we need to be careful when we say things like that, because the Holy Spirit is not merely an attribute of God, or a ministry of God or a symbol of God. Holy Spirit is not an impersonal force like gravity, or like Star Wars...The Holy Spirit is a Person. How do we know?

1- Personal Pronouns- John 16:¹³ *But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all the truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come.* The Spirit is never referred to in the Bible as an “it.” Grammar matters. Can you join me in a pledge? “I hear by resolve never to call the Holy Spirit in it.”

2- Personal Attributes.

The Holy Spirit has attributes that only persons can have: mind, emotion and will. The Bible says the Holy Spirit can be lied to, Acts 5:3. The Holy Spirit teaches us, John 14:26. The Holy Spirit can be resisted, Acts 7:51. The Holy Spirit intercedes in prayer for us with heart-felt groans, Romans 8:26. And the Holy Spirit's feelings can be hurt. He can be grieved when we willfully sin against His promptings, Ephesians 4:30. Friends, you can't grieve an it. “Wind” can't pray and intercede in prayer for people. The point is that the Holy Spirit is a person. When you are a Christian the Holy Spirit lives inside of you...which means that you are walking with a Divine Person, not a force, not an it. Which has significant applications for how we pray and how we ask for guidance- that will come in a couple weeks.

Lesson #2 The Deity of the Spirit: He's as fully God as is God the Father or God the Son. How do we know that?

1- Attributes of God- The Spirit is Eternal Hebrews 9:14, The Bible declares that the Holy Spirit is omnipresent, Psalm 139. That the Holy Spirit is omnipotent, Isaiah 40:13. That the Holy Spirit is omniscient and he knows the deep things of God that only God knows, 1 Corinthians 2:10-16.

2- Works of God- The Bible also tells us that the Holy Spirit performs supernatural works that only God can do. The Holy Spirit is the Divine author carrying along the process of writing of the Bible, 1 Peter 1:10-12. And that he was responsible for the virgin birth of the Lord Jesus, Luke 1:35. He was involved in the creation of the world, Genesis 1:2. And the miracles and works that Jesus and the early apostles performed were through the power of the Holy Spirit, Matthew 12:28, Acts 1:8. And because the Holy Spirit is a person and because the Holy Spirit is God, it means friends, that the Holy Spirit has authority in our lives. He's not Jiminy Cricket- optional advice to give us. On the other he's not our own personal force that we control and tell Him what we are going to do. He's God the Holy Spirit, and we must revere Him and listen to Him.

Lesson #3 The Trinity in The Bible

One objection someone might have is “Well the word Trinity isn’t in the Bible.” That’s true. Trinity is a helpful theological word used to describe how God reveals himself in the Bible. One on hand we know that **God is One in essence- Deuteronomy 6:4 Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one.** And yet, all throughout the Scripture we see the diversity of God in three distinct persons, with different roles yet acting in unison with one another.

In Creation:

Genesis 1: *In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. ² Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters.³ And God said...* And who is the vocal agent of creation? John 1 reveals that it was Jesus himself, the Son who spoke everything into existence as the Word of God. And so all three persons of the Trinity are engaged in creation. Which is why it says, ²⁶ *Then God said, “Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness.* Who is he talking to? Angels? But we aren’t made in the angels’ image. Who is he talking to? The Trinity is hinted at right at the beginning.

In Jesus’ Baptism:

Mark 1 ⁹ *At that time Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. ¹⁰ Just as Jesus was coming up out of the water,*

he saw heaven being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. ¹¹ And a voice came from heaven: “You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased.” All three present at the same time, with different roles.

In Our Salvation:

1 Peter 1:1-2 *Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To God’s elect... ² who have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through the sanctifying work of the Spirit, to be obedient to Jesus Christ and sprinkled with his blood.* The Father- decrees the plan of salvation, the Son purchases salvation, the Spirit enables our salvation.

Commissioning of the Disciples:

John 14:¹⁶ *And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever— ¹⁷ the Spirit of truth.* And this explains why after Jesus’ resurrection and before his ascension into heaven, He tells them in **Matthew 28:19** to baptize new Christians in the *“Name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.”*

OK “Trinitarianism 101”- class over. Are you still tracking with me friends? OK- you say, Pastor Nate that was great, think I got most of that and I promise not to call the Holy Spirit an “It” anymore...but what difference does Trinitarianism make in my life? Well it makes all the difference! It’s exploding with practical implications for how we pray, how God acts in the world in His church, how we overcome temptation...but what I want to focus on today gets to the core of what you and I have been made for.

Some of the greatest Christian thinkers all the way back to St. Augustus have been considering the powerful implications what it means that each member of the Trinity, for all eternity glorify and love one another as the Bible tells us. Let me weave together two quotes one from Cornelius Plantinga and one from C.S. Lewis, and then unpack what they are getting at.

Cornelius Plantinga- "The Bible says that the Father, Son and Holy Spirit glorify one another. That means the persons within God exalt, commune with, and defer to one another. Each harbors the others at the center of his being. God's interior life, therefore, overflows with self-giving love for others."¹

C.S. Lewis- "What does it all matter? It matters more than anything else in the world, for the whole dance of this three-personal-life is to be played out in each of us.

They are the great fountain of energy and beauty, spurting up at the very center of reality. And there is no other way to the happiness for which we have been made."²

Here's what they are getting at. If before the foundation of the world the Trinity has been glorifying each other in perfect relational love and unity- it means loving relationships are at the center of who God is and why he created. Out of this relationship and love came all of creation. In other words- at God's core- **he's a family builder.**

Romans 8: ¹⁴ *For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God.* ¹⁵ *The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again;*

rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by him we cry, "Abba, Father." ¹⁶ *The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children.* God is building a forever family and invites each of us to be part of his family forever. Do you know this is why you exist? Now, some implications of this for our lives.

Prioritize Family Building! If God is a family builder- if this is what he is at his core, then one of the core ways you and I bear the image of God in the world is through family building. Those who are married and/or have children build into and invest in your families! Grandparents- invest in your kids and grandkids. Aunts and uncles do the same! Single men and women- unless you have been given the gift of singleness- you should be seeking a fellow compatible Christian to commit to and marry and build a family. This is Trinity glorifying, beautiful work! This is discipleship! We have been sold a lie that the most important thing you can do in your life is get degrees, achievements, climbing the corporate ladder, and make lots of money...oh yeah, and maybe have a family somewhere along the way...That's not how God sees it! Relationships and Family building are at the center of who God is.

¹ From *God the Holy Trinity*, Timothy George ed., Cornelius Plantinga.

² C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* p.174-176.

Because we live in a broken, imperfect world with sin and dysfunction- we may live with the reality of broken families or absent families. But family building isn't only biological or marriage or having kids. Some of us are called to singleness and the way we build family is through neighboring well, through investing in vital friendships. Through serving and loving those who may need a loving family- mentoring students at Urban Promise, that may be through foster care, adoption.

Our church prioritizes Family Building! This a family. It's a big family, a diverse family, an imperfect family, but a loving family... and we are constantly inviting and drawing in new family members which is beautiful. Are you investing here in your family members?

Are you a Family Builder? God is. Family, Friends, Church

TIME: How are you making the time for unhurried relationships to happen?

WORDS: How are you expressing with words how you love and how you feel about each other.

SERVICE: What are you doing to serve your wife/husband/kids

Jesus invites us into the Family of God. He came for this...Communion is the family meal that Jesus invites us into through his own sacrifice for us. And it's just the shadow of what is coming in the great feast in heaven for the family of God.