

May 30, 2021  
Holy Trinity Sunday  
John 3:1-21

*“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.”* This is truth. This is Gospel. This is comfort. God gives the greatest of gifts that we poor, fallen sinners would be saved by His merciful grace.

Yet a big problem that gets in the way of people receiving God’s grace in Christ is that people think they’re too smart for God. I’m sure this has always been the case, but it has probably been exacerbated by the giant leaps in scientific knowledge and technology humanity has experienced in the last couple hundred years or so. We can explain so much phenomena in our world that used to be mystery that we think there ultimately is no mystery anymore—all things will ultimately boil down to science and given enough time, science will explain all things.

Such thinking doesn’t leave room for a mysterious God above and beyond us. It certainly doesn’t allow for a Triune God; three divine persons that are yet one divine substance—“one God in Trinity and Trinity in Unity, neither confusing the persons nor dividing the substance.” I mean, you can recite the Athanasian Creed until the cows come home and in the end it still isn’t going to make sense to anyone.

The reality is that our science and technology combined with our right of free speech combined with the post-modern idea that truth is malleable so John Smith’s truth and Joe Blow’s truth can be totally contradictory but they’re both still “valid truths” combined with our fallen sinful nature combined with who knows what else has filled us with a hubris with which we put

ourselves on par with God, perhaps even judge Him. “Hubris” is a fancy word that means exaggerated pride or self-confidence, and it’s kind of a great word to describe how we like to see ourselves in relation to God.

Of course this is obvious outside the Christian Church. How do you know somebody is an atheist? They tell you. Hubris is over the top in those who enjoy attacking our faith. But this hubris is rampant inside the Christian church also! You can see it in our history as popes and councils deemed themselves worthy to create new doctrines not found in Holy Scripture and to declare them divine as if coming from God Himself. In the past several decades many denominations have straight up overruled what Scripture defines as sexual sin saying in effect, “Well that’s what they thought way back then in the Bible. But we know so much more about love and sexuality now. We’re so much smarter than they were. So we’re going to say that God’s okay with that now. And sure, God was all against sacrificing babies to Molech and called it an abomination—but abortion is different. It’s like-medical and we’re killing the babies before they’re actually born so God is cool with Planned Parenthood, in fact we’re going to have our pastor bless the new clinic.” Hubris.

But it’s right here in this room also. Scripture and Jesus Christ Himself are pretty clear. Man and woman join together sexually, they are one flesh, it’s a sacred, God-ordained until death do you part thing, it’s a marriage, and it’s nearly always been the godly practice to have it publicly officiated before you actually do the deed. But how many folks in this very room have at some point responded to that idea with, “Seriously? It’s just sex. It’s a natural thing. I’m justified in quenching this desire. It’s got to be okay if I really feel something for the other person.” Or take it one step further: “We can save a lot of money if we live together, and it’s a good way to test if we’re right together for marriage. You know, take this human person God

created and is precious in His sight and take them out for a test drive, kick the tires and check under the hood like you do a car before you decide to buy it.” How many of us say without any hesitation “My divorce was the right thing to do” when every single time divorce is mentioned in the Bible it stands condemned by God?

How many of us look at God’s moral law in the 10 Commandments, Jesus’ teachings of humility, service and sacrifice, look at the clear greatest Commandments to love God above all things and to love our neighbors and ourselves, but have the hubris to say, with our actions if not with our words, I’m willing to obey that so far, but at such-and-such a point I get to draw a line because I know better...better than God. I’ve got reasons that overrule God. I’ve got explanations that explain away God. There is no mystery here—I have authority over God.

I wonder if it was hubris that led our LCMS lectionary committee to stop right in the middle of a paragraph at the end of our Gospel reading: *“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.”* I mean, it does kind of seem that they said, “Let’s just read the part where God is loving and Jesus is saving and nobody is getting condemned. You know, where God is doing the stuff we like, before He gets mysterious and His divinity makes any demands on us.”

Those words are true and are the wonderful Gospel in a nutshell. But the words that follow reveal the God above and beyond us and call on us to submit to His goodness and grace. *“Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God. And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil. For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the*

*light, lest his works should be exposed. But whoever does what is true comes to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that his works have been carried out in God.”*

Loving the darkness is a First Commandment issue—“You shall have no other gods.” Loving the darkness is idolatry, making the mysterious God above and beyond you no God at all because something else is being god in His place. Often it seems, that something else is our own thoughts, reasonings and desires simply wanting to be in charge, wanting to do evil, and the only way to do that is to turn away from the Triune God’s light and truth.

The dangerous weird temptation for Christians is that we somehow think we can grab hold of that John 3:16 Gospel, put Jesus in our pocket, and take Him into the darkness with us because somehow...we know better. We’re too smart for God.

Trinity Sunday is a sort of wake-up call to us. What’s the truth? The truth is that in our fallen state God is too much God for us. He is too righteous, too holy, too just, too above and beyond us in divine perfection that we have no part with Him whatsoever. We can’t be smarter than God because we can’t even approach the glory of His being, let alone understand His ways and thoughts! The only thing that saves us from rejection by this God of glory and might is that He is also too loving for us!

He gave His only Son, Jesus, into our flesh. The unfathomable God of the Holy Trinity inexplicably sent The Son into humanity to be our brother, bear our sin, suffer our condemnation and rejection, be our resurrection and take us into His kingdom because God so loved the world. This makes no sense to us. Not just the mechanics of it, but the love of it. We would not and could not love like this. It’s too big, too selfless, too much sacrifice, too much...godly.

In the face of this truth that is the light of God come into the world, we’ve got to submit to this God of love. If we’re too smart for this God of love, we’re stupid beyond measure. We

turning from the light and in our own presumed brilliance grabbing hold of the darkness, the world, the idols, the rebellion that condemns us.

Look at your self-ruling attitude. Look at the fallen behaviors and how you justify them to yourself. Look at your sins and how you make them acceptable. Check your human reasoning and then ask, “Am I being too smart for God?”

Then repent and turn to the man who is, in fact, too much God for you. Beg His forgiveness, and trust that by His divine plan, He was sent to be the Savior who was big enough to take your sins to His grave. He is the God who loves enough to bring you through death to eternal life.

Don't be too smart for God. Be true. You aren't God, a god or anything close to God. But thanks to Jesus you do belong to God. Being baptized, being reborn of the water and Spirit of God, do what is true, faith in the risen Christ, and come into His light and know that, even though it doesn't make a lot of sense, the God who really is too much for you, is, by grace, for you.

Amen.