

Acts 2:14a, 22-36
"The Greatest Spectacles"
The Holy Trinity

May 27, 2018
First Lutheran Church, Glencoe, Minn.
Pastor Peter Adelsen

On this Memorial Day weekend, we remember the men and women of the armed forces who gave their lives to protect our freedom.

Grace, mercy and peace be to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ! Amen!

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ:

[Intro]

Today is the 102nd running of what is known as "The Greatest Spectacle in Racing" — the Indianapolis 500 mile race.

I know that everyone is not a fan of auto racing, but being from Indiana, auto racing just becomes a part of who we are. There is something about that roar of the 33 cars as they pass by at more than 200 miles-per-hour and that roar of the fans cheering on their favorite driver.

It is called the "Greatest Spectacle" because no one knows what to expect. The pole-sitter may not make it passed the first lap. The leading driver may take the white flag — for one lap to go — and not finish. This race is so unpredictable.

And, this is why people are so mesmerized by this race. This race is so hard to comprehend.

In a similar way, God could be called a spectacle, because He is hard to comprehend.

[The Greatest Spectacle]

Now, many of us wear eyeglasses – like myself. We wear eyeglasses to better comprehend the world around us. For everyone who has poor vision, is lost without glasses.

There may be the “Greatest Spectacle” in racing happening today in Indianapolis, but for those with poor vision, we need spectacles — glasses — to be able to see close or far things.

By wearing spectacles — glasses or contacts — we are able to see better. We can better understand the world around us. So, instead of bumping into things or not being able to see far away things, we are able to see what is right in front of us — because of *these* spectacles.

Today, the Christian Church is celebrating Holy Trinity Sunday. Today, we celebrate the one true God in its union in Trinity.

Now, the Trinity can be a spectacle in itself. For outside of faith, the Trinity is hard to comprehend.

For this reason, our Triune God has given us the true “Greatest Spectacles” — the Creeds — which helps us better understand God. The Creeds are like magnifying glasses into the Triune God.

You see, the Apostles’, Nicene and Athanasian Creeds give us a short explanation of what is fully taught about the Father, Son and Holy Spirit in God’s Written Word.

In fact, the reason the Creeds were written in the first place was so Christians could better understand God. The Apostles’ and Nicene Creeds were written short for a reason — so Christians could memorize the basics of the faith, since the printing press was still centuries away and most people could not read.

Then some centuries later, the Athanasian Creed came on the scene, which further defined the Triune God.

[Peter Professes the Trinity]

In today’s second reading, Luke records Peter’s Pentecost sermon, in which Peter says, “***[Jesus] being therefore exalted at the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured out this that you yourselves are seeing and hearing***” (Acts 2:33).

Here, Peter is saying what we profess today — Jesus has equality with God the Father. And more than that — God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit are One God.

Now, the Trinity can be hard to comprehend, but that’s why God gave us the Greatest Spectacles — the Creeds — so that we could better understand Him.

For in the Trinity lie our only comfort, life and salvation. (FC-Epitome, 512.18)

As fallen creatures, we could never fully comprehend God, but the Creeds give us a glimpse into what God has done for us and for all of His creation.

You see, the Creeds summarize who God is and what He has done for the world:

- Creating and preserving all things of out of Fatherly love.
- Redeeming the world in the life, death, and resurrection of the Son — Jesus Christ.
- And, calling and gathering believers into the Church by the Holy Spirit.

Out of love, the Father sends the Son:

Jesus said: ***“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son...”*** (John 3:16a)

And out of love, the Father and Son together send the Holy Spirit:

Jesus said: ***“When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth...”*** (John 16:13a)

The Holy Spirit brings us to Christ:

For we cannot by our own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ. For it is only by the power of the Holy Spirit that we have come to know Jesus as our Lord and Savior. (Paraphrasing Luther’s Third Article on the Creed)

And, the Holy Spirit shows us the Father’s love:

“That whoever believes in [Jesus] should not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:16b).

For it is the Holy Spirit who led Christ’s apostles — and the prophets before them — to document what God had done.

[The Creeds are a Gift from the Triune God]

Now, at the time of the Protestant Reformation, there were many reformers who wanted to throw out everything tied to the Roman Catholic Church. Some reformers got rid of singing, others instruments, and some wanted to scrap the liturgical history of the church altogether.

Then there was Martin Luther. He was a reformer, yet he was particular on what should remain and what should be scrapped.

Luther emphasized that it was not his intention to lead Christianity away from the ancient creeds, but rather to call it back to them.

He wrote: “This confession of faith we did not make or invent, neither did the fathers of the church before us.”

What Luther is saying is this: God gave us the Creeds as a gift. God gave us these spectacles — the Apostles’, Nicene and Athanasian Creeds — to better understand Him.

Yet, like eyeglasses, even with them on, we can never see perfectly, but it opens our eyes to the world. Or in this case, the Creeds open our eyes to what we can comprehend about the Triune God: The Father, who created the world; the Son, who redeemed the world; and the Holy Spirit, who sanctifies and renews the Church.

[Pew Study]

Now, even with the Creeds readily available today, there are those who do not want to use those spectacles to understand God better.

According to the Pew Research Center, 80 percent of Americans say they believe in God, however only 56 percent surveyed said they believe in God “as described in the Bible.” And digging deeper, most who believed in God “as described in the Bible” said that they don’t regularly read or study the Bible and often they know very little about God.

This may lead them into placing their own reason over what God’s Word says. This may lead them into believing wrongly about who God is.

So, in not knowing the one true God in Trinity, they create a false god in their mind. Maybe a god who cheers you on no matter what you do – good or bad.

This may sound familiar.

You see, beginning with our first parents — Adam and Eve — all humanity has rebelled against God and has fallen into the darkness, which is sin, death and the power of the devil. As fallen creatures, we wanted it our way – rather than God’s way.

[The Void without God]

Recently, we have seen a rash of school shootings.

You may wonder where is God in all this turmoil? You may ask yourself, why won’t God stop this.

At the same time, it appears to me that the news media and politicians are trying to push or pull the American people into one camp or another – pro-gun or anti-gun.

Others bring up mental health, which I believe is closer to the real issue.

For me, I believe this gun violence is related to morality – knowing good from evil, right from wrong.

So, where is God in all of this? He is there. He is listening to our prayers. He is with us and with those facing these terrible times. God is there in every good and bad situation.

Now, I believe the increase in shootings has a correlation to belief in the Triune God.

You see, as the Triune God has been pushed aside in today’s culture, there has opened a void. And, sadly, I believe that much of that void has been filled with Satan and his minions who are pushing immoral living in television, movies, books, magazines and video games.

Now, there is a lot to the saying, “You are what you eat.” In this case, “We are what we watch and read.” Slowly, through the media, we become desensitized to the evil around us.

So, instead of praying to the Triune God for help and guidance, we find ways on fixing the problem ourselves.

But, for us who know God, we know that we are fallen creatures. We know we need to be rescued.

[Our Baptismal Promise]

So, on this Holy Trinity Sunday, we remember what God has done for us – once and for all time – out of His love.

God the Father sent His only Son into the world to become man and to redeem and save each and every one of us by His death and resurrection.

Then God the Father and the Son sent the Holy Spirit so that we would have faith and come to Jesus, who is the world's only source of hope, life, and salvation.

And, faith comes by hearing. Our faith in Jesus Christ officially began in us at our baptism, when we heard the pastor speak over us, “In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit” — the name of God — as water was poured on our head.

In our baptism, we have God's own pledge and promise that He has forgiven our sins and delivered us from sin, death and the devil. So, if you are ever in any time of doubt or temptation, we can always remember that nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus.

And whenever we see someone in need of God's love, we can tell them about God's love for you and me.

We also rightly remember our baptism when we live in repentance and faith in the Triune God, who made us His beloved children.

And, we also remember our baptism at each Divine Service with the Trinitarian Invocation. So each time you hear: “In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit”, you should remember that we have received victory over sin, victory over death and victory over the devil. And, we have received forgiveness of sins, salvation and life everlasting through Christ's sacrifice for us.

For all that has been done for us, we give thanks to the one true God – the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. We give Him thanks for giving us a glimpse into Him, through the spectacles of the Creeds, which show us God and His love for us.

This is our Creed. This is our faith. This is our trust. This is most certainly true.
Amen.

The peace of God which surpasses all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus, our Lord. Amen.

✠ SOLI DEO GLORIA ✠