

Message for Sunday, May 31, 2026

Title: Why care?

Scripture: Matthew 28:16-20

Welcome

Announcements:

Giving Options... online, basket, QR code, etc..; Special Offering for June will be Peace with Justice (there is a video); Scholarship applications are due on Monday, June 1; We still need help with hospitality and with cookies; Mountain View Book Club will meet on Tuesday, June 2 in Verde Hall; Would you like a Sunday message in the mail? Let the office know.

Fellowship of Love

Song

Call to Worship

L: In the beginning....

P: God created mortals, and asked us to care for all creation

L: In the fullness of time, God sent Jesus...

P: Jesus showed us how to love as God loves.

L: In our time, and throughout eternity...

P: Jesus commands us to lead others to follow in the name of the Creator, the Christ, and the

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Holy Spirit. Amen.

Unison Prayer

Loving God, in that first spark of creativity, you set the cosmos in motion.

Time after time, your creative presence brings new lift and hope.

We experience your love as we see the marvels of nature.

We experience your love, as we study the ethics and compassion of Christ.

We experience your love through the ever-presence of your Holy Spirit, who was with you in the beginning, was with Christ throughout his ministry, and is with us to the end of the age.

For your loving presence in all your infinite ways, we give you thanks. Amen.

L: As we come to this time of offering, let us remember that giving is our opportunity to respond to God's generosity with our own.

Offering

Song

Please join us as we say together the Nicene Creed (Unison)

We believe in one God,

the Father almighty,

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maker of heaven and earth,

of all things visible and invisible.

--

And in one Lord Jesus Christ,

the only Son of God,

begotten from the Father

before all ages,

--

God from God,

Light from Light,

true God from true God,

begotten, not made;

of the same essence as the Father.

--

Through him all things were made.

For us and for our salvation

he came down from heaven;

he became incarnate by the Holy Spirit

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and the virgin Mary,

and was made human.

--

He was crucified for us

under Pontius Pilate;

he suffered and was buried.

The third day he rose again,

according to the Scriptures.

--

He ascended to heaven

and is seated at the right hand of the Father.

He will come again with glory

to judge the living and the dead.

His kingdom will never end.

--

We believe in the Holy Spirit,

the Lord, the giver of life.

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He proceeds from the

Father and the Son,

and with the Father and the Son

is worshiped and glorified.

--

He spoke through the prophets.

We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic church.

We affirm one baptism

for the forgiveness of sins.

--

We look forward to the

resurrection of the dead,

and to life in the world to come.

Amen.

Scripture: Matthew 28:16-20 NRSVue

Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them.

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--

When they saw him, they worshiped him, but they doubted.

--

And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.

--

Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit

--

and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

L: The word of God for the people of God.

P: Thanks be to God.

Message: Why care?

Language is important. How we choose to speak about something, why we choose the words we do and how we choose to arrange them invokes not just understanding but meaning, or the process of making meaning. A quote that often rings in my head around this is this line from the musical *My Fair Lady*, in the beginning of the show Professor

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Henry Higgins is lecturing Eliza Doolittle and he says “A woman who utters such depressing and disgusting noises has no right to be anywhere – no right to live. Remember you are a human being with a soul and the divine gift of articulate speech; that your native language is the language of Shakespeare and Milton and the Bible; and don’t sit there crooning like a bilious pigeon.” Now I don’t support the blatant sexism in the quote but the premise of the importance of language I certainly do. Make no mistake though, I do believe that language and meaning making grows and changes, but for me it is the expressiveness of language and the meaning behind it that is important.

This is Trinity Sunday. It is not a church Holy Day that gets much attention, though it is one I have spoken about off and on over the past twenty years. Today we will be focusing on this doctrine, and less so on scripture. In order to talk about the doctrine of the Trinity there are hurdles we have to overcome. First, why does this matter to our lives? Second, how do we get the doctrine of the Trinity? And finally, where do we go from here?

Why does this matter?

As with many great theological thoughts and matters these concepts can feel to only exist in a vacuum. That somehow these concepts are created, and we don’t really understand them, so they get put aside as an idea that we mentally agree with but really it makes no difference in our lives. In order to begin this conversation, I want to point out something very important, and that is our role in this conversation. We are not passive

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spectators in this conversation. I am operating on the assumption that you are a member of this church or another church, or you have been baptized. This means you are a disciple of Christ. At its most basic a disciple is a student. And what do students do? They learn. I am emphasizing this because I'm going to do my best to show you why the Trinity matters, but in the end I don't control what you learn nor how you apply it. The process of making meaning is something that you have to *engage* in.

The Trinity matters because it influences how we choose to see the work of Christ. How we view that work determines how we are going to be disciples of Christ. Your view of the Trinity affects whether Christ's work of salvation was intentional or not and whether salvation is part of the nature of God or if it was an add on as an afterthought because God was lonely. Think of it this way. If you are dating or you are married do you want the person with you because they need someone to entertain or take care of them or are you with them because you desire a relationship with them? The intentionality of the relationship matters in your interpersonal relationships, and it matters with God.

In every step of today's message, we are simplifying things in the interest of time and for clarity. Remember your role is that of a disciple, a student, and I do encourage you to do some reading on this subject outside of this morning. I could preach on the Trinity every Sunday for the rest of my life and not exhaust this topic so remember today is just some foundational work for something you can learn more about.

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How do we get the Trinity?

If we accept that how we talk, that is the language we use, around things matter then how did we end up with the doctrine of the Trinity? There is a reason I said earlier that I wouldn't be focusing on scripture as much. This scripture today mentions the Trinity, but it is not a theological statement about the nature of God and our relationship with God. Any verse you find in scripture is written well before the development of the doctrine of the Trinity. The idea that scripture talks about everything and explains everything is false, and to put it bluntly, makes an idol out of scripture. It makes scripture some magical theological and advice-giving device that gives answers instead of offering a testament of how people of faith have wrestled with who God is.

Knowing that we aren't going to wrestle directly with scripture we are going to turn our attention to the 4th century. This is the time of Constantine and the Council of Nicaea which gives us the Nicene Creed that we read before this message. The council of Nicaea is where this creed was formulated but it wasn't a one and done thing. Orthodoxy, which means correct belief, isn't something that is voted on and that's it. It's a process that is developed over time through political intrigue and argument.

Emperor Constantine calls a council together because the churches are fighting. The churches are fighting because there are two predominant ideas of who Jesus is and how Jesus is in relationship with God. These positions are Arianism and Athanasius-ism.

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These positions are predominantly argued by their respective founder on one side and their biggest champion on the other. Arianism is founded by Arian, a theologian in Alexandria Egypt who runs into a problem with his bishop. Arian is reacting to an idea called Sabellianism which emphasis the oneness of God so much that there was nothing that distinguished Jesus from God. Think of it this way, it wasn't Jesus the man who died on the cross, it was God, so there was a moment in time when God died according to Sabellianism.

Arianism reacts to this and like most reactions runs to far the other way. In short it claims, at least in part (remember we are simplifying here), that there was a time when Jesus didn't exist. That God created Jesus as the Logos, beginning of the gospel of John, to be his liaison. So, it gets around the issue of if Jesus is God how could he die? Obviously, we aren't going to answer this question today, instead I'm just laying the grounds of the argument.

Athanasius, and the council of Nicaea, rejects this idea. Athanasius is attending the council as a deacon, shortly afterwards he becomes Bishop of Alexandria (there's your political intrigue). The council takes issue over a certain Greek work, homoousions, which means "of one substance." Basically, they argue that no, Jesus isn't created; instead, Jesus is literally the same thing as God somehow. Most of us know the famous example of this later used by Saint Patrick. Trying to explain the Trinity he uses a three-leaf clover and

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shows that to be the Trinity. This doesn't quite get to the heart of the Trinity; Augustus explained it better by using the example of a tree. You have the leaves, trunk, and roots. All part of the same tree but all with distinctive differences.

Over the course of 60 years these two ideas slugged it out till finally the Nicene creed won out. All of this sounds like quaint history, interesting for sure but of no real substance to our lives today. As I said at the beginning of this message, how we talk about things matter. We have been handed the idea that somehow, (and I'm going to use short hand here), through some divine mystery Jesus and God are the same. We can't necessarily understand it completely, but it is important.

Where do we go?

If we accept the theologically orthodox position that Jesus and God are of the same substance then what do we do with that? This is as simple as it is complex. It means that at the heart of God is a desire to be reconciled with the world. Sometimes when we talk about salvation we talk about it as an exchange of goods. We all laugh at the song "The Devil Went Down to Georgia," as absurd, someone selling their soul for something? Yet that is what many of us have changed Christ salvation work into. It's a transaction. I give you my soul; you give me eternal life. I agree with your position, you save me from hell.

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Instead, if we understand Jesus and God to be the same it means that we aren't selling ourselves at all. From before the creation of the universe God has desired all things to be reconciled to Godself. We are brought into relationship with God through Christ not because Christ is a created being to be sacrificed, but because the very nature of God is one of relationship. Of time spent. We aren't saved because God wants or needs our worship, we are saved because the very nature of God is one that calls us into relationship with Gods self and with others.

I want to remind you I am simplifying a very complex topic today, perhaps even oversimplifying. One of the reasons for that is because I strongly believe that our doctrine mean something for our lives. While my explanation gives meaning for how you relate to God what does this mean for how you relate to others? It means that if God values relationship so much that it is at the heart of one of our most critical doctrines then God desires that relationship with others and calls you into embodying that relationship to others. This is a state of being for God in which God is always seeking relationship not because God needs something or because you need something but because that is who God is at the very core.

This means that person you run into at the restaurant today or the grocery store is a person that God values and is currently in a relationship with. God is at work in all of those around you, not because you have to share the gospel, but because that is who God is. I

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believe this should impact how we choose to treat others and it should impact how we share our faith. You see sharing our faith is less about giving someone the gospel, it is more about opening up to them about a relationship that you have and a relationship that is offered to them.

How we talk about things matter. It influences how we view our world and how we view others. Will you see your world differently today? Amen.

Pastoral Prayer and The Lord's Prayer

Song

Benediction

Song

Goodbye