

Trinity Sunday - 2016

"Knowing Fully vs. Fully Known"

Text: Acts 2:14a, 22-36

May the love of God the Father fill you with wonder; may the sacrifice of God the Son fill you with thanksgiving; and may the indwelling of God the Holy Spirit fill you with comfort, faith, and hope – all gifts from our Triune God on this Trinity Sunday. Amen.

Fellow Christians: About six thousand years ago our God brought the universe into existence by the power of his Word. He said, and it was so. Do you understand how he did that or how exactly it came about? On that first day of earth's existence he created light, simply calling it into existence by declaring that it would be so, and it was. Do you believe in light; that is, do you believe that such a thing as light actually exists? Of course you do. Why? Why do you believe that it exists? Because you can see it. You know it exists because the evidence is all around us. We see everything that we see because of the existence of light.

Next question – and here is where things begin to get interesting: Do you fully understand light? The answer is no, you really don't. Oh you can look it up online – as I did – and sort of begin to grasp some of the basic concepts, but you really don't fully understand it. Not even those who study it for a living pretend to know all there is to know about it. And yet you believe that it exists, despite the fact that you don't fully understand it, because you see – literally see – evidence all around you.

This is by no means unique in our existence. In fact the same thing applies to many other phenomena in our lives. Do you really fully understand electricity? Radiation? Gravity? Me neither. But we still believe that those things exist. How about wind? What is it exactly and how does it begin and end. More perplexing still, why does it seem to take such random paths? Though you may have no answers to these questions, as residents of North Dakota you obviously still believe that that wind nonetheless exists.

This morning we celebrate an aspect of our God that no one fully understands – his Triune Nature. Though it's easy enough to speak of three-in-one, three Persons and yet one God, once we start to get into the specifics (as we did this morning in the Athanasian Creed) we find ourselves in very deep waters indeed.

Yet we believe in the Triune nature of our God. Why? Because God said so, in his Word.

Our text for this morning represents just one of those "God said so" proofs of that which we believe, even though we don't fully understand it. That text is found in the Book of Acts, the Second Chapter:

^{ESV} **Acts 2:14a, 22-36** *But Peter, standing with the eleven, lifted up his voice and addressed them:...* ²² ¶ *"Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs that God did through him in your midst, as you yourselves know--* ²³ *this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men.* ²⁴ *God raised him up, loosing the pangs of death, because it was not possible for him to be held by it.* ²⁵ *For David says concerning him, "'I saw the Lord always before me, for he is at my right hand that I may not be shaken;* ²⁶ *therefore my heart was glad, and my tongue rejoiced; my flesh also will dwell in hope.* ²⁷ *For you will not abandon my soul to Hades, or let your Holy One see corruption.* ²⁸ *You have made known to me the paths of life; you will make me full of gladness with your presence.'* ²⁹ ¶ *"Brothers, I may say to you with confidence about the patriarch David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day.* ³⁰ *Being therefore a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that he would set one of his descendants on his throne,* ³¹ *he foresaw and spoke about the resurrection of the Christ, that he was not abandoned to Hades, nor did his flesh see corruption.* ³² *This Jesus God raised up, and of that we all are witnesses.* ³³ *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.* ³⁴ *For David did not ascend into the heavens, but he himself says, "'The Lord said to my Lord, Sit at my right hand,* ³⁵ *until I make your enemies your footstool.'* ³⁶ *Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified."*

So far the Word of our God. What a rare and wonderful privilege to possess these words of timeless truth as our sure and constant guide. That our God would bless our study of these perfect words, so we pray, **"Sanctify us by your truth, O Lord. Your word is truth."** Amen.

Isn't it just a pure joy to simply *worship* our God, to fall on our knees in humble awe before him and to unreservedly praise, honor and glorify him? This is a *good* thing. This is fitting, right, and utterly appropriate on absolutely any occasion – because he is worthy. So many things in

life require careful balance. Not here. Here there need be no hesitancy, no reluctance, no apprehension, no measured restraint. Human beings simply cannot worship our God too much or too well.

Understand, however, that we don't worship our God because we fully grasp everything there is no know about him. We worship him, in part, because we don't. We fully acknowledge that he is infinitely far above us, so much more powerful, wise, and grand than anything we mortals could ever fully comprehend. In fact that's part of what makes God worthy of our worship – the very fact that we don't, and can't, grasp all there is to God.

But just here we see a growing and most troubling trend. There is a rising inclination in our society to reject the very existence of God simply because he cannot be explained scientifically or grasped intellectually. Man asks "*How can this be?*" and if the answer is not readily available, man dismisses the very concept of God. As man's understanding concerning how things work in God's incredible creation increases, man's tendency now is to worship the creation, or his limited understanding of that creation, rather than the Creator himself.

On the one hand, this is most puzzling. Who wants to worship that which is on a par with himself? Isn't worship supposed to be reserved for that which is greater, grander, and more sublime – in the case of our God, *infinitely* so? And yet on the other hand this tendency to dismiss and reject the very existence of God is anything but surprising, for this is the very essence of our foolish, fallen nature from the very moment of our conception. It is the delight of Satan, into whose control every single one of us is naturally born. Every human soul was born profoundly foolish and spiritually ignorant – a natural enemy of God. More than even that, we were born with an inordinate love of self. In fact it is relatively easy for man to reject God because man is so enamored with himself. It's only natural then that if God doesn't seem to measure up to our own natural beliefs, instincts, and understanding, then man will invariably dismiss God and opt to believe and honor self, and he will naturally do so every single time.

So it is that when the Bible communicates to us that God is one, and yet three separate and distinct persons, man naturally says, "*That's impossible. It makes no rational sense.*" and dismisses it out of hand. Man can't grasp how such a thing can possibly be true, so man naturally concludes that it is *not* true.

This sort of skepticism extends throughout the doctrines of Scripture. The virgin birth can't be true – rejected. The resurrection from the dead can't be true – rejected. The miracles, the two natures of Christ, the creation of all

things from absolutely nothing by the power or God's Word alone – rejected, rejected, rejected.

God knew this about man, by the way. That's why in our text Peter articulated what God himself did to address this natural skepticism we all share: ***But Peter, standing with the eleven, lifted up his voice and addressed them:...*** ²² ¶ "***Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs that God did through him in your midst, as you yourselves know...***" Do you see the challenging situation that God faced in connection with mankind and the sending of Jesus Christ? Jesus had to be set apart from all of the false messiahs that came before and would come after. God did this by the miraculous signs that were performed. Even Jesus' sworn enemies were perplexed by these miracles by the way, "*For how,*" they reasoned, "*could someone who does not have divine approval do such divine things?*" And yet man now takes the very proof that God provided to mankind to verify Jesus' person, work, and office, and turns it into the very reason for rejecting him. Because they cannot rationally explain what happened, they deny that it ever did. Or, they reason, if it did happen once, why isn't it still happening today?

And, by the way, did you notice the change in Peter's words in our text? That's the post-Pentecost Peter you're hearing, the Peter who was in possession of the promised outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Far from trying to prevent Jesus from paying his sin-debt on the cross, Peter here thrills to the fact that Jesus did just that. Gone forever is the old Peter. This is the Peter upon whose testimony God established his New Covenant Church. What you see here then is the glory of that gift we celebrated last week, the special gift of the full measure of the Holy Spirit given to God's New Testament Church at Pentecost.

So then, we don't worship our God because we know or grasp him fully. In fact we freely admit that God is so far above us that there is undoubtedly infinitely more that we *don't* know about him than there is that we do. But you and I are obviously fine with that. That's why we worship him, our Triune God, and him alone.

Yet there is another reason, isn't there? We don't worship our God because we fully understand him, we worship him because he fully understands us.

Peter continues in our text: ***"...this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men."*** Note this well. God knew all

along that mankind would opt to kill its own Savior. That's just how perverse and unworthy is the entire human race, and God knew that about us. Yet God decided to go forward with his plan anyway. With **"definite planning and foreknowledge"** God sent his Son to be killed by us – the very souls he came to save. He knew we would do it, but he also knew that there was no other way for us to avoid spending all eternity in unspeakable agony. Why would he do such a thing? **"God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son..."** Again from Ephesians 2:4-7: **"But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, ⁵ even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ--by grace you have been saved-- ⁶ and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, ⁷ so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus."**

We worship our God because he fully understands us, and yet, understanding as he certainly does just how unworthy and undeserving was and is every single human soul, he loved us with an impossible love – to the point that he sacrificed his dearest Treasure to spare us the punishment we so obviously deserved.

Consider just how amazing this truth really is to you personally. God knows everything about you. He knows your terrible, revolting thoughts. He hears the Godless things that come out of your mouth and he sees the sin that you manage to hide, at least for the most part, from other human beings. He knows your doubts, your faithless fears and anxieties, and your perverse pleasure in the temporal shine and fluff of this world. All this he knows about you – knows you better than you know yourself – and still he loves you, still he cares about you and for you, still he longs to have you with him for all eternity in heaven. Still he sent his Son, for you.

That's why we worship him, isn't it. The world is filled with doubt because of the demonstrations of his power. You and I are filled with faith and hope because of the demonstrations of his love. The world refuses to worship a God that it cannot fully comprehend. You and I need to introduce them to the God whose greatest attribute is his grace – his undeserved love for sinful, rebellious mankind. As amazing and incomprehensible as the creation of the universe in six days by the power of his Word alone truly is, Jesus' love for me, *the sinner*, is greater. As astounding as the miracles, the Triune nature of our God, and the resurrection of the dead most certainly are, even more amazing is the fact that God now credits the perfection of his Son to me. As astounding as are such things as color and light, infinitely more so is the fact that God, in bringing me to saving faith through the power and indwelling of his own Holy Spirit, has removed my

spiritual blindness and unbelief and has declared me to be his own child and heir of heaven.

All of this has been given to you and me, freely, for Christ's sake. You want something to marvel at, something to be amazed by? Start there. Amen.

Scripture Readings

^{ESV} **Proverbs 8:22-31** "The LORD possessed me at the beginning of his work, the first of his acts of old. ²³ Ages ago I was set up, at the first, before the beginning of the earth. ²⁴ When there were no depths I was brought forth, when there were no springs abounding with water. ²⁵ Before the mountains had been shaped, before the hills, I was brought forth, ²⁶ before he had made the earth with its fields, or the first of the dust of the world. ²⁷ When he established the heavens, I was there; when he drew a circle on the face of the deep, ²⁸ when he made firm the skies above, when he established the fountains of the deep, ²⁹ when he assigned to the sea its limit, so that the waters might not transgress his command, when he marked out the foundations of the earth, ³⁰ then I was beside him, like a master workman, and I was daily his delight, rejoicing before him always, ³¹ rejoicing in his inhabited world and delighting in the children of man.

^{ESV} **John 8:48-59** The Jews answered him, "Are we not right in saying that you are a Samaritan and have a demon?" ⁴⁹ Jesus answered, "I do not have a demon, but I honor my Father, and you dishonor me. ⁵⁰ Yet I do not seek my own glory; there is One who seeks it, and he is the judge. ⁵¹ Truly, truly, I say to you, if anyone keeps my word, he will never see death." ⁵² The Jews said to him, "Now we know that you have a demon! Abraham died, as did the prophets, yet you say, 'If anyone keeps my word, he will never taste death.' ⁵³ Are you greater than our father Abraham, who died? And the prophets died! Who do you make yourself out to be?" ⁵⁴ Jesus answered, "If I glorify myself, my glory is nothing. It is my Father who glorifies me, of whom you say, 'He is our God.' ⁵⁵ But you have not known him. I know him. If I were to say that I do not know him, I would be a liar like you, but I do know him and I keep his word. ⁵⁶ Your father Abraham rejoiced that he would see my day. He saw it and was glad." ⁵⁷ So the Jews said to him, "You are not yet fifty years old, and have you seen Abraham?" ⁵⁸ Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am." ⁵⁹ So they picked up stones to throw at him, but Jesus hid himself and went out of the temple.

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Trinity Sunday – May 22, 2016

The Opening Prayer by the Pastor

The Opening Hymn – 246 (Red Hymnal)

"Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty"

The Order of Service – Hymnal page 15ff. (Red Hymnal)

The Scripture Lessons: (Printed on the back page of this bulletin)

The First Lesson: (Proverbs 8:22-31) On this day we celebrate the triune nature of our God. We begin, therefore, with one of the many examples found in the Old Testament that teach us that our God is One, but that this one God manifests himself in more than one Person. We are to hear the words of this Proverb in the voice of Jesus himself, the 2nd Person of the Trinity, as he teaches us something about his eternal "beginning."

The Second Lesson: (John 8:48-59) In this reading Jesus communicates also to us today something of the mystery and majesty of his nature. We need to recognize that, as God, we should fully expect that there are aspects of his nature or essence that we will never be able to fully grasp or understand as mortal human beings. One of those characteristics is the fact that our God is Triune. Though unable to fully comprehend, still we believe.

The Confession of Faith -

The Athanasian Creed – (See Bulletin Insert)

The Pre-Sermon Hymn – 746 (Brown Hymnal)

"Father Most Holy, Merciful and Tender"

The Sermon – Text: Act 2:14a, 22-36 (Printed on the back page of this bulletin)

"Knowing Fully vs. Fully Known"

The Offertory – (Hymnal page 22)

The Offering followed by the Prayers

The Pre-Communion Hymn – 311 (Verses 1-2 & 4) (Red Hymnal)

"Jesus Christ, Our Blessed Savior"

The Preparation for Holy Communion (Red Hymnal page 24ff)

The Distribution

The Nunc Dimittis (Red Hymnal page 30)

The Benediction

The Closing Hymn – 252 (Red Hymnal)

"We All Believe in One True God"

Silent Prayer

Welcome! - We warmly welcome any visitors worshipping with us this morning and invite you to join us each Sunday at this time. We are glad you are here! **To our Visitors seeking an altar at which to commune** – Since we desire to follow the words of our Savior, we practice "Close Communion" – a practice that is not new to confessional Lutherans. This practice stresses both our concern for others, not wanting them to receive the sacrament to their harm (1 Cor. 11:27-30) and the importance of unity in confession and faith (1 Cor. 10:16-17). For this reason we ask that anyone who has not established this unity through membership in a CLC congregation please first meet with the pastor to discuss this Scriptural doctrine before communing. This is a practice that we follow out of love and concern for you, and out of obedience to God's Word.

Attendance - Sunday (41) Ave (48)

This Week at St. Paul:

Today	-10:00 a.m.	– Worship Service w/Holy Communion
	-11:15 a.m.	– Fellowship/coffee time
	-11:15 a.m.	– Meyer Baby Shower
Next Sunday	-10:00 a.m.	– Worship Service
	-11:00 a.m.	– Fellowship/coffee time

CLC News – Pastor David Pfeiffer has accepted the call to Holy Trinity of West Columbia, SC. Seminary graduate Joseph Naumann is considering calls to both Mt Zion of Detroit and Immanuel of Mankato, MN. Teacher Jeff Karnitz is considering the call to Gethsemane School of Spokane, WA.

Delegate Conference – Still not too late to represent St Paul at the upcoming Jamestown Delegate Conference. See Pastor Roehl.

Summer Schedule – We have now entered our summer schedule. That means that there are no Sunday or mid-week Bible Classes or Confirmation. It does not mean, of course, that private and family Bible study should be suspended. We will, God willing, resume our normal group study after Labor Day.

Ruth Meiers Food Drive – We are once again conducting our food drive in support of the Ruth Meiers House. Please see the information on the table in the fellowship hall, and bring any items you would like to donate by June 1. For more information, please see Eileen McEnroe, or refer to the card in your mailbox.

Baby Shower – A baby shower is planned for this morning during the fellowship time for Samuel and Karla Meyer, and their son David. All welcome.