

B Proper 22 (Gen) C:Trinity (Rom)	<p style="text-align: center;">1st of <u>10 Big Ideas of Christian Faith</u></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Trinity - the Divine Team Rom 5.1-5, Gen 2.18-23, Eph 4.11-13</p> <p style="text-align: center;">by Tim Isbell</p>	Preached 6/10/2007. Again on 5/31/2015 at SF Bay Christian Fellowship (SF).
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Thesis: The Christian doctrine of the Trinity is a key differentiator of our faith, affirming that God is beyond us, beside us, and within us.

(The week before I preached this sermon, I set up the Ten Big Ideas of Christian Faith series with an introductory sermon. So, if you plan to preach the whole distributed series, start with the initial sermon: [The Result of Right Worship](#).

(By the Divine Team, I do not mean the Divine Council. Divine Team is about the one God in three persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. The Divine Council refers to the spiritual beings created by God, some of which rebelled against God, as did humans. The Bible sometimes refers to the Divine Council as "the host of heaven" and "rulers and authorities." So, this sermon is about the Divine Team, NOT the Divine Council. For a brief overview of one way of thinking about this topic, check out thebible/project.com [Divine Council video](#). Now, let's begin this sermon on the Trinity - the Divine Team.)

(These notes are also available at bit.ly/trinitysun)

I expect different religions to ...

... agree on many things. And to have many practices and perhaps even beliefs.

After all, there is only one God, and he made every human in his image. So, when various people try to understand how to live in their world, they will, of course, have many things in common.

But every religion also has its distinctives—things unique to itself. The 10 Big Ideas of Christian Faith series is full of distinctives. One Big Idea is our understanding of God's Triune nature.

The Apostles Creed (often used at baptism) from the 2nd century makes this clear. The Nicene Creed from the 4th century also does. These creeds have differentiated Christian faith from other religions for 18 centuries, and both are very strong in affirming the Trinity. Any tradition that confesses these creeds we consider authentically Christian: Catholic, Episcopalian, Baptist, Presbyterian, Methodist, Pentecostal, Lutheran, and so on. So, I don't recruit people from these traditions to attend New Life.

They're quite welcome to join us if they want to, but I don't try to persuade them to change their current tradition to ours.

Some "near-Christian" religions do not confess these creeds, such as Christian Scientists, Jehovah's Witnesses, Mormons, and Unitarians.

And many religions are quite clearly not Christian.

Implication #1: People from traditions that confess the Apostles and Nicene Creeds are brothers & sisters in the Christian faith.

But how can 3 be 1?

It is mathematical nonsense. Sort of like my grandson's shirt that says $6 + 4 + 3 = 2$ looks like nonsense. (Unless you are a knowledgeable baseball fan and recognize that if a man is on first base and a ball is hit to shortstop, who throws to the second baseman covering second base, who then throws to the first baseman, it completes a double play.)

And then there's Deuteronomy 6:4: Hear, O Israel, The LORD our God, the LORD is one. So, how can we profess faith in the God of Deut 6.4 and sing songs with words like "God in three persons, blessed Trinity?"

The Bible never explicitly says God is "three persons of one substance." This statement comes from the creeds.

As close as we come to explicit scriptural support are a few scriptures where the three persons of the Trinity show up within 2-3 paragraphs, such as our text today.

Romans 5:1,5 (NLT) Therefore, since we have been made right in God's sight by faith, we have peace with God because of what Jesus Christ our Lord has done for us... For we know how dearly God loves us, because he has given us the Holy Spirit to fill our hearts with his love.

But that's a long way from explaining the doctrine of the Trinity.

Our doctrine of the Trinity does not come from a few proof texts.

It comes out of the early church's experience with God. Early disciples of Jesus were devout Jews who believed in the God of Deut 6.4 to the core.

But after the crucifixion and resurrection, they realized that when they had been in Jesus's presence, they had been in the presence of the God of Deut 6.4.

After Pentecost, they experienced God in a 3rd way: as Spirit living within them, giving them guidance and power from within 1) to be witnesses for the God of Deut 6.4, and 2) The power to transform into Christ-likeness.

With this kind of experience, the early Christians began to understand God's "3-ness," and eventually, theologians began to construct doctrines of the Trinity.

The clearest way I can express the Trinity is as the Divine Team

(I picked this thinking up from a Preaching Today Audio Seminar by J.I. Packer. I think it was titled "The Divine Team").

One always shows up with others. Where one is involved, all are involved.

1. God the Father is the God beyond us – creator and governor of the universe. God is everywhere and always, in all places at all times.
2. God the Son is God beside us – redeemer who came into our world and became one of us. He is the Word of God made flesh.
3. God the Holy Spirit is God within us – the indwelling comforter, sanctifier, empowerer. God is here and now – in my place and in my time, working within me to conform me to his divine image and empowering me in his adventure.

Implication #2: The Divine Team is beyond us, beside us, and within us – all at once.

Let's look at Gen 1 & 2

Genesis 2:18-23 (NLT)

¹⁸ Then the Lord God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper who is just right for him." ¹⁹ So the Lord God formed from the ground all the wild animals and all the birds of the sky. He brought them to the man to see what he would call them, and the man chose a name for each one. ²⁰ He gave names to all the livestock, all the birds of the sky, and all the wild animals. But still there was no helper just right for him.

²¹ So the Lord God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep. While the man slept, the Lord God took out one of the man's ribs and closed up the opening. ²² Then the Lord God made a woman from the rib, and he brought her to the man.

²³ "At last!" the man exclaimed. "This one is bone from my bone, and flesh from my flesh! She will be called 'woman,' because she was taken from 'man.'"

Before this God created light/darkness and declared "it is good." ... land/sea ... plants ... animals ... stars/planets ... fish and sea creatures ... animals ... Adam ... Every time he finished a stage declared "it is good."

But here in Gen 2 God declares "It is not good for the man to be alone..." Adam has not yet sinned. Adam is in full relationship with God. And yet God declares that something is not yet right/complete.

So God creates Eve. And in doing this, he creates a little community, a dependent need between the two. And as I think about it, isn't that just what we'd expect from God, the Divine Team, who set out to create humans in his own image?

We are not designed to worship God alone; we are designed to worship God together.

- We are not designed to work for God alone; we are designed to work together.
- ... to mourn alone ... mourn together.
- ... play alone ... play together.

I know it's popular in some circles to talk about God being all we need. We even sing about this. But God's truth is that we are designed for more than that, and this is...

Implication #3. We are designed for human relationships. It's a key part of being made in the image of the Divine Team.

Let's look at another scripture: Eph 4.11-13

Now all of you together are Christ's body, and each one of you is a separate and necessary part of it.

You and I are not the body of Christ in our world; the church is Christ's body, and we individuals are designed to take our place as working parts of Christ's body.

Just as JESUS was incarnate in 1st century Palestine to walk and live among the people, so the church is the incarnate body of Christ walking and living among people in every century since Pentecost.

Just as Jesus lived with the full presence of Holy Spirit in 1st century Palestine, so does his church live with the full presence of the Holy Spirit today. This leads to...

Implication #4. To fulfill God's design for us we must put our gifts to work in his church.

The church is not primarily about what we can get out of it. We are not consumers of God. The church is the group where we gather to give our worship to God. And the church is the context where we pool the gifts God gives us and soak in the Spirit's power and carry out God's agenda.

The Divine Team is on a mission

God is a "missionary God." He is unwilling to let his broken world spiral into the chaos Satan desires. God's mind and heart are on a mission to do something about it.

God came to Abram/Sarai to enlist them in his mission, and then to Isaac, and then Jacob, and many others in the Old Testament.

Then at just the right time, God the Son, Jesus Christ, came to earth to do something about the brokenness – to die to turn the vector toward the new life. And he left us with crystal clear instruction:

Matthew 28:19 (NLT) 19 ... go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.

God, the Holy Spirit, at Pentecost, came to empower Jesus' apprentices to make Jesus' mission their personal mission.

God was and always has been on a mission. And he created us in his image, and gifted to join his Divine Team, and filled us with his Spirit, and called to the mission.

This is as true for you and me as it was for any biblical character. Maybe more so; we're on this side of the incarnation and Pentecost!

Implication #5. God's mission is now the Church's mission and the Church's mission is our mission.

The church's mission is to manifest the living Triune God in the world through its members' lives and responses to one another.

The Holy Spirit didn't come to Pentecost to 120 scattered individuals; he came to 120 Christ followers gathered in one place.

The Holy Spirit doesn't transform us so we can live safely in God's presence. He transforms us so we can live with hope in a broken world, sharing our hope with others!

Let's go live this life!

Other resources:
Click on the link for the Google Slides for this sermon. (Similar to PowerPoint)