

Today is the Festival of Holy Trinity. On this day we don't simply celebrate who God is as useless trivia facts. God being Triune is key to who He is. We believe in God in Trinity and the Trinity in Unity. We believe in one God and three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The Bible talks not only about who God is, but what He does. The Bible describes what the Holy Trinity does for you. **THE HOLY TRINITY COMES DOWN TO GIVE BIRTH FROM ABOVE.**

First, I. You must be born from above. To set our scene for this Trinity Sunday, Jesus is approached by a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus. This man who is described as a ruler of the Jews has a name to match that title. In Greek, the name Nicodemus means conqueror of the people.

Yet the way he approaches Jesus is hardly the way a conqueror of the people would go about such a task. He acts more like a shy mouse. **“This man came to Jesus by night and said to him, “Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher come from God, for no one can do these signs that you do unless God is with him.”**” Why go at night? Maybe to avoid being caught by his peers who were skeptical of Jesus.

Even further, it would appear that Nicodemus, this conqueror of the people, was in the dark about who Jesus really was. He admires that Jesus is able to do amazing signs, but is Jesus more than that? Jesus throws a wrench into Nicodemus' admiration, Jesus replies, **“Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.”**

In this text we have some wordplay going on, the word ἄνωθεν in Greek can mean again, or it can mean from above. Many translations have again. Are you born again? Thus, someone might ask you, are you a born-again Christian? And this is apparently how Nicodemus takes it because he asks, **“How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?”** Nicodemus is thinking about a literal, physical second birth. We all know this is an impossibility.

Yet we try to reinvent ourselves by our own power. Maybe something small: we vow to lose weight by starting a diet, we buy a new wardrobe, or we get a new hairstyle or beard. Maybe we even try something more drastic: we look to start a new career, we move to a new town, or even we legally change our name.

At the heart of the human experience is the desire to start fresh, we want to give ourselves new birth. Maybe that's part of what's at the heart of the transgender movement. Did you know in the state of Wisconsin with the right documentation after a surgical procedure, you can amend the sex on your birth certificate?

But where do all these journeys of self-transformation end up? With the same old self staring back in the mirror. Nicodemus knew this way back in the first century. This is why the emphasis is not on being born again. You could be born

again and again. That's what the Hindus believe about reincarnation, but it doesn't matter how many times you're born or reborn unless you're born from above. You need to be born from above, and that's not something you do. It's something that needs to happen to you.

THE HOLY TRINITY COMES DOWN TO GIVE BIRTH FROM ABOVE. The Holy Trinity is all about that up and down motion. We see this in our text, that II. The Father sent the Son from above. We hear some of the most familiar words in the Bible from Jesus' mouth, John 3:16–17 **“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.”**

The Holy Trinity is not some useless fact, but the Holy Trinity exists to save you. John 3:16 teaches us, “This is the way God loved the world: he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.” God the Father loved you by sending His Son Jesus from above to Earth below. That's how we understand verse 13: **“No one has ascended into heaven except he who descended from heaven, the Son of Man.”** Jesus is the one from above who went to Earth and back, for you.

Jesus tells Nicodemus, **“And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.”** Jesus Christ, the Son of God, came from above, and His ministry culminates in his being lifted up. This lifting up does not refer to His ascension, but rather to His crucifixion. Jesus Christ is lifted high upon the cross, for the whole world to see so that whoever looks upon Him and believes may not perish but live eternally.

The Father lifted His Son up on the cross that you may be healed. The Father lifted His Son up on the cross that you may never die. The Father lifted His Son up on the cross that your sins may be forgiven. The Father lifted His Son up on the cross that you may be born from above.

This is why the Trinity matters, this one God in three persons works tirelessly to save you and to love you. The Father loved you so much that He sent His Son Jesus. The Son loved you so much that He took on all of your sins, dying and rising so that you too will die and rise. The Holy Spirit loves you so much that He comes to you and brings you birth from above.

III. The Spirit welcomes us into this new birth. Jesus explains about the Holy Spirit in our text today: **“Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not marvel that I said to you, ‘You must be born [from above].’ The wind blows where it**

wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.”

And so it is that the way you are born from above happens down below. It happens at the baptismal font where water meets Spirit. **“Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.”** A baptismal certificate is a death certificate. Through baptism you have died to your earthly birth. A baptismal certificate is a birth certificate, but this certificate shows your birth from above.

This birth from above means you’re welcomed into fellowship with the Holy Trinity. That is your new identity. You don’t need to reinvent yourself again and again and again, no change to your outfit, your job, or even your birth certificate is going to fix your problems.

But whenever you doubt your path in life, whenever you don’t know where you belong, survey that wondrous cross upon which the Son of Man was lifted up. Know that that same cross that marked Jesus marks you. X marks the spot and the mark of the cross is your identity. You are a child of the cross, you are a child of the Triune God.

“For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.” This passage doesn’t mean that you no longer are male or female. It doesn’t mean that you’re no longer Asian, European, or African. It doesn’t mean your job doesn’t matter. What it does mean is that first and foremost, the most important part of who you are is that you are one who is born from above through baptism and faith in Christ. You are the one whom the Triune God loved in this way: namely, that Jesus died for you. What more can you want?

All the Triune God asks us to do is simply trust in Him. Believe His promises, and keep receiving His gifts. That’s the mark of a true Christian, one who trusts in Jesus as his savior. And to trust Jesus as your savior means to believe that He has given you birth from above through water and the Word by the working of the mighty Holy Spirit.

Finally, **“If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth.”** Welcomed into this family of the Triune God, we can then set our minds on the things above because we have been born above. Keep your eyes on the prize, even as we can be confident knowing that this Holy Trinity has named us and claimed us. Amen!