

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

The portion of Scripture before us is found in the Gospel of Saint John the third chapter beginning at the first verse and we read in Jesus' name:

There was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. ² 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." ³ Jesus answered and said to him, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." ⁴ Nicodemus said to Him, "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?" ⁵ Jesus answered, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water

and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. ⁶ "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. ⁷ "Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again.' ⁸ "The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit." ⁹ Nicodemus answered and said to Him, "How can these things be?" ¹⁰ Jesus answered and said to him, "Are you the teacher of Israel, and do not know these things? ¹¹ "Most assuredly, I say to you, We speak what We know and testify what We have seen, and you do not receive Our witness. ¹² "If I have told you earthly things and you do not believe, how will you believe if I tell you heavenly things? ¹³ "No one has ascended to heaven but He who came down from heaven, that is, the Son of Man who is in heaven. ¹⁴ "And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be

*lifted up,*¹⁵ *"that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.*

Heavenly Father, sanctify us by the truth;
Your word is truth. Amen.

Dear Redeemed by the Blood of the Lamb,

Three is a magic number. Somewhere in the ancient mystic Trinity you get three as a magic number. Past, Present, and Future. Faith, Hope, and Charity. Heart, Mind, and Body. All of these give you three as a magic number.

For those ancient people like me, you might remember a little thing called "Schoolhouse Rock." This was a series of shows that not only showed cartoons and such, but they used cartoons to show us, the children of the day, very important things. We learned how a bill became a law. We learned how to count by fives... and maybe, most

important, we learned that three is a magic number. And I felt it only fitting that Schoolhouse Rock would talk about the ancient Trinity... but like so many others it would not explain that Trinity. Today, though, we will be focusing on this ancient Trinity and all that it means to us and all that it has done for us. Dear friends, the Trinity that we will be focusing on is: ***God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.***

Already, three verses into the Bible, you have the entire Trinity presented to you. In the beginning God created... the Spirit of God was hovering... God spoke, thus you have God's word. Thus, from the beginning we have the entire Trinity present and ready to create, care for, and redeem mankind.

Man was created in the image of God, in 'our' image man was created. Man lived in perfect accord with God, but then man

sinned and because of his sin he was removed from the Garden of Eden. While contemplating man's fate, God had a conversation that we are privy to... in Genesis 3:22 it reads, "***The the Lord God said, 'Behold, the man has become like one of Us, to know good and evil...'***" Yet, another time within the first three chapters of the Bible we hear about God in the plural.

Now fast forward thousands of years and we are introduced to Jesus. Jesus, we are told, is God... but wait, wasn't God back in the Old Testament? Wasn't He smiting people and making life a living hell for those who would dare cross Him? Wasn't God being this all around evil and maniacal fellow that you wouldn't invite to a party? Sadly, that is how many people view God still to this day. We, at times, can view God as this overbearing, mean, crotchety old man who sits on a cloud ruining peoples' days. And we do not see the real God.

But what about this Jesus fellow? If He is God how could He live on this earth like me? If He is God how could He die? If He is God why would He care about us? I mean, I've read the Old Testament and God was mean... this is not God. Besides that, if Jesus, this man, was born, had parents, lived on earth, suffered at the hands of men, and died... then He wasn't that great of a God. Again, sadly, this is how many people think to this very day. Jesus cannot be God because God would've just smited those people. Jesus cannot be God because He would've just come down from the cross and lived. Jesus cannot be God because He died. And when we view God in this way, we do not view the real God.

And what about the Holy Spirit? He can't be God... He's a dove. He doesn't have a body, He doesn't really seem to do much... He seems like a very underwhelming God if you

ask me. Sadly, many people have relegated the Holy Spirit to one weekend a year, and even then He is over shadowed by Jesus.

So then, what, we have three Gods? I mean we just heard that the Father is God, Jesus is God, and the Holy Spirit is God... or so the Bible claims. How can there be three Gods, I thought you said there was one God. Pastor, I'm confused.

Good.

The concept of the Trinity is not something that we will ever fully understand this side of heaven. Think about it: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. One God, Three persons. Our God is a triune God, a three-in-one God; who is also one-in-three. He is one God who consists of three persons and at the same time He is three persons who is one God. Got it?

Or if you want consider it this way, the Father is God, but He is not the Son nor the Holy Spirit. The Son, Jesus Christ, is God, but He is not the Father nor the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is God but He is not the Father nor the Son. They are all God, they are all true and fully God, but there are three distinct persons that we see.

An easier way to look at the Trinity is in relation to what they have done and what they continue to do for us. God the Father created us and sustains us. The Father begat His Son, before time began, and sent His Son Jesus Christ into this world for us. The Son Jesus Christ came into this world and lived a perfect life for each and every one of us, He suffered and was crucified for us; yet, three days later He rose from the dead. The Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son and He is with each and every one of us, sanctifying us (making us holy) and keeping

us ever faithful as we continue in Gods word and sacraments.

God is one, there are not three Gods. But within the Godhead are three distinct persons. This is exactly what we declare in all of our creeds, but perhaps most fully and precisely in the Athanasian Creed. And on this Trinity Sunday we make sure to recite the Athanasian Creed, we make sure to spend one day (though we could spend years) focusing on this distinction: One God, three persons... One God, three persons. Three persons, one God.

Friends, this side of heaven it will be difficult to understand and we will never fully comprehend it. But that does not mean that we need to be like the world and mock our God. The world looks at Christians as mighty confused people... Father, Son, and Holy Spirit... sounds like three gods to me.

But there is one God, just like there is one Father, one Son, and one Holy Spirit.

One Father who created us and who gave us His law... though we despise and fail to follow it constantly. One Son who came to this world to live the perfect life for us and provide atonement for all of our sins. One Holy Spirit who has come to us through the waters of baptism and the word and who continues to strengthen our faith in our Savior through that same word, baptism, and the Lord's Supper.

One God... three persons. This truth is spoken most eloquently by Jesus Christ Himself. In Matthew's gospel (28:19) He speaks to His disciples once He is raised from the dead and tells them, "***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.***" But also in our text before us today, Jesus tells Nicodemus

that we will enter into God's kingdom unless we are born of the water and the word... for spirit gives birth to spirit. Once we are born of the spirit of God, well then we can believe in our Savior Jesus Christ who is that Son of Man, and Son of God, who must be lifted up and believed in... so that we will have eternal life. Yes, in our gospel lesson before us today Jesus shares the beautiful Trinity and how each member is just waiting for us to enter in our eternal home with Him.

Dear friends in Christ, three is a magic number. Somewhere in the ancient mystic Trinity you get three as a magic number. The most majestic Trinity that we know of and preach about is the Trinity that has created us, sustained us, redeemed us, and sanctified us. The Triune God: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. One God, three persons.

Thanks be to God the Father for creating us and providing a way into His heaven once our first parents had sinned. Thanks be to God the Son for living and dying for us... but also for rising for us, assuring us that our spot in heaven is now secure. And thanks be to God the Holy Spirit for continuing to strengthen our faith in our Savior and all that He has done.

Thanks be to our Triune God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen.