

Season after **PENTECOST**

Prayers

Let us pray for the whole Church of God in Christ Jesus and for all people according to their needs.

Collect of the Day

Almighty and everlasting God, You have given us grace to acknowledge the glory of the eternal Trinity by the confession of a true faith and to worship the Unity in the power of the Divine Majesty. Keep us steadfast in this faith and defend us from all adversities; for You, O Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, live and reign, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Scripture Readings

Psalm 8 (antiphon v. 9)
Proverbs 8:1-4, 22-31
Acts 2:14a, 22-36
John 8:48-59

Hymns

Hymn of the Day – 498
Other Hymns – 500 (OT), 578 (OT), 802 (OT), 810 (SR), 540 (G), 506, 507, 948

Blessed Father, from You comes all that is, and we are forever indebted to Your grace for the gift of life. Receive this day our special thanks for the redemption You have provided in Jesus Christ, Your Son, and for the work of the Spirit in bringing us to know You by faith and to be adopted as Your children by Baptism into the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Blessed Father, You desire not the death of the sinner but that all may live. Grant Your Holy Spirit, that hearing Your Word all people may be brought to repentance and may confess with us their faith in Jesus Christ as Lord. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Blessed Father, You have revealed Yourself to us in Christ, that we may know You by faith and confess You before the world. Give us Your Spirit, that all churches may confess truly and faithfully Your Word and live in harmony of doctrine and life, in anticipation of that day when we shall kneel together at Your altar. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Blessed Father, You have established marriage and sanctified the home to be a place of blessing and love. Give to parent and child the courage to love as You have loved us. Unite them in their common life by Your Spirit to know Jesus and serve Him. Bless the single with chastity, comfort the widowed, protect the orphan and defend the helpless. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Blessed Father, You guard Your world as Your own possession and have established governments and leaders to serve Your purpose. Bless King Charles; our prime minister and premier, and all elected and appointed officials, that in their stewardship of the nation and this province they may be faithful and serve honourably for our benefit. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

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Blessed Father, You have suffered fully the cost of love through Your Son. Give healing and peace to all the afflicted, the grieving and the dying [especially those who have requested our prayers, including _____ and those we name in our hearts (brief silence)]. Give them all that is needful, that they may endure their illness confident of Your presence. Supply them with grace sufficient for their every need. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Blessed Father, Your Son was the voice that spoke all things into existence, and Your grace still preserves all that You have made. You did not abandon Your people when they abandoned You, but You have delivered us by the blood of Christ. Grant us Your Spirit, that we may know Your Word and keep it in faith through all the days of our earthly pilgrimage until we are joined with faithful Abraham, with patriarch, prophet, apostle and evangelist, in Your presence forevermore; through the same Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

Season after PENTECOST SERMON

THE HOLY TRINITY (Series C)

Sermon Text: John 8:48-59

“It Matters”

In the name of The Holy Trinity—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

The Word of God that is the basis for our meditation is the Gospel Reading from John, chapter 8, and where especially we read again these words: “So the Jews said to Jesus, ‘You are not yet fifty years old, and have you seen Abraham?’ Jesus said to them, ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am.’ So they picked up stones to throw at him, but Jesus hid himself and went out of the temple.” So far the words of our text.

‘It doesn’t matter what you believe, as long as you are sincere in what you believe.’ That’s a popular opinion that you hear these days, isn’t it? But when you stop to think about, it makes no sense. ‘I sincerely believe that it doesn’t matter if I were to drive down the highway at 150 kilometers-an-hour after consuming a six-pack of beer.’ I wonder, however, if the RCMP would think that it doesn’t matter?! Or take this popular one: ‘I believe in God . . . as I understand God to be.’ Or this one: ‘I believe that all religions are just different paths to God.’ But is this really so?

After all, contrast those popular statements and common ideas with what the Athanasian Creed, that we usually confess on this Trinity Sunday, says: “*Whoever desires to be saved must believe*” . . . this. And then a bunch of things are said: “*One God in Trinity and Trinity in Unity. Equal in glory and majesty. Uncreated, infinite, eternal, almighty. The Son not created but begotten. The Holy Spirit neither created nor begotten, but proceeding.*” And further: “*Jesus Christ at the same time both God and man, who suffered for our salvation, rose again from the dead, ascended into heaven, and will come to judge the living and the dead.*” That’s what we confess. That’s what we believe. And do you know what? It matters!

But why does it matter? That’s a question many are asking these days. And some would say, ‘It doesn’t matter!’ It doesn’t matter to the millions of people in Ukraine who have lost everything as a result of the devastation caused by the Russian invasion of their country. It doesn’t matter to those who are mourning the loss of a loved one, or to those who lost their job and don’t know how

they're going to make ends meet. It doesn't matter to those whose marriage has fallen apart, or to those who received the dreaded news of cancer from their doctor after a check-up. It doesn't matter when inflation continues to dominate not only the news, but our daily lives. Cold, hard facts like the Athanasian Creed don't matter when the rubber of faith meets the hard road of life. And the church, therefore, needs to be more loving and accepting, more practical and less doctrinal—so some would say . . . even many within the church.

But the fact of the matter, however, is that it is precisely for all those reasons that it does matter! Love and doctrine are not opposites . . . or at least they should not be. For since the Scriptures tell us that “God is love,” then to know God is to know love. Conversely, to not know God is to not know love.

And when the Athanasian Creed says “*whoever desires to be saved must believe*”. . . this; it says that not because you have to pass a test and have all the right knowledge in order to get into heaven—although that's probably how it sounds sometimes. No, it matters because to know God aright is to know His love for you . . . to know that in love God died for you. The Christian faith, you see, isn't about good people doing good things in good ways in order to have a good life. Instead, it's about God, who alone is good, dying on a cross of all things for no-good sinners. It's about a loving God doing good things for unlovable people.

More specifically, it's about God the Father giving His own Son into death as the payment price for the sins of the entire world, and who then gives the Holy Spirit to join us to Himself both now and forever. That's who God is and that's what God does. The two go together. And you either have both, or you have neither. So St. John puts it in his First Epistle: “This is love, not that we have loved God but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins. Whoever, therefore, confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God.”

And that's why it matters. That's why “*whoever desires to be saved must believe*” . . . this. It's a matter of life and death. And if God only loves us when we are good? . . . well, that matters. If it wasn't God Himself dying on a cross to pay for your sins . . . that matters. If there are many ways to get to heaven and the Son of God did not really have to become one of us in order to die in our place on a cross . . . that matters. But, on the other hand, if God in love desires to save us for eternity . . . if He sent His eternal, only-begotten Son into our flesh to accomplish this by dying Himself . . . if He sends His Spirit by means of His Word to give to us personally the blessings of what happened there on the cross and to be with us and comfort us through all the trials and troubles and tragedies of life . . . well, that matters, too!

Yes, it matters that we know aright who God is . . . and not just the facts about God—Three in One and One in Three and all that; but what God has done for us in a manger and on a cross at a real time and a real place in the course of history. For, there, God shows His great love for us sinners. There, God shows that He will never leave us or forsake us, no matter how bad things get. And that matters!

In fact, that was the plan of God from before the foundation of the world. It's who God is and what God does. We heard in the Old Testament Reading from the book of Proverbs that

Wisdom—the Son—was there with the Father at creation. They delighted in and loved one another, and they delighted in and loved their creation. And then, St. Peter in his Pentecost sermon spells out how God’s plan to redeem His creation from sin and death had been revealed long ago, and then accomplished by Jesus. Yes, Jesus who is before Abraham and also the promised offspring of Abraham . . . Jesus who shows us the Father and His love for us . . . Jesus who sends the Holy Spirit to give to us, to join us to, to unite us in that love so that we might truly know God and His love.

But that’s precisely what the Jews of Jesus’ day, and what so many people today, cannot wrap their heads around and, in their hardness of hearts, do not accept—this amazing love of God for sinners. But if God is not this, and if God does not do this for us; then we are the ones who must do it. Bear our own sin. Find our own way to eternal life. Be our own saviour. The Jews here in our text foolishly thought they could do that . . . and so do many people today. To which, however, Jesus would remind us: “I am the Way and the Truth and the Life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.”

And do you know what? That matters. It matters, when death is staring you in the face, that you have been baptized into the name of The Holy Trinity who has defeated death and the grave for you. It matters, when the trials and tumults and tribulations of this world come upon you, that you receive the Body and Blood of the only-begotten Son of God and Son of Mary who has endured all this for you, who knows what it’s like to carry burdens, and who has promised to be with you and never leave you or forsake you. It matters, when the thought of all your sins and failures and shortcomings cause you to be afraid of standing before the judgment seat of the Lord and Creator of all on the Last Day, that here and now He says to you through the Holy Spirit: “*I forgive you all your sins*. If anyone abides in My Word, he will never see death.”

“*The catholic faith*” is what the Athanasian Creed calls all this. Yes, ‘catholic’; that is, universal, that which at all times and in all places is to be believed, taught, and confessed because God’s love in His Son is meant for everyone, for all people. . . including, therefore, you and me; and not just for a select few.

Yes, God for you . . . God with you . . . God in you. The Trinity in Unity and Unity in Trinity. That matters! And that is something, as the Athanasian Creed reminds us, to keep, to guard, to treasure, to hold on to, to share with others, to stand firm in . . . After all, “*This is the catholic faith; whoever does not believe it faithfully and firmly cannot be saved.*” Amen.

Now may the peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.