

The Triune God.

Text: Matt 28:16-20

Suggested Hymns:

521, 140, 222, 294, 142

1) What we are to know and confess

2) How we are to show our gratitude

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is Matthew 28:16-20, ¹⁶ *Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, to the mountain which Jesus had appointed for them.* ¹⁷ *When they saw Him, they worshiped Him; but some doubted.*

¹⁸ *And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.* ¹⁹ *"Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,* ²⁰ *"teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the [world]." Amen. (NKJV)*

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

Trinity Sunday prompts us to give special thanks to God for having revealed Himself to us in the Holy Scriptures. Man's salvation depends upon his knowing the true God.

These are the words of Jesus, the Teacher come from God, and very God Himself, as we read in John 17:3, ³ *"And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.*

And in Jeremiah 9:24 it is written, ²⁴ *But let him who glories glory in this, That he understands and knows Me, That I am the LORD, exercising lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth. For in these I delight," says the LORD.*

The prophets of old, in summing up the special favours and privileges enjoyed by their people, declare¹, *In Judah God is known; His name is great in Israel.* ² *In Salem also is His tabernacle, And His dwelling place in Zion.*

But outside of the Scriptures there is no saving knowledge of the true God.

Listen to St. Paul's testimony concerning the heathen nations, as we read in Romans 1:19-20, ¹⁹ *because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them.* ²⁰ *For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse.* This means that there is the voice of conscience testifying to the fact that there is a God. But the mere knowledge that there is a God is not sufficient for salvation.

The people of ancient Athens serve as an example that, left to his own resources, man will have a wrong conception of God. What a contrast between man's own conceptions of God and the God of the Bible!

The Church has done wisely in designating a special Sunday of the church-year as Trinity Sunday. We are thus given an opportunity to consider the debt of gratitude we owe God for having revealed Himself to us in the Scriptures.

Our text, taken from the closing words of the Gospel according to St. Matthew, teaches us *What we are to know and confess concerning the true God*, and *How we are to show our gratitude for having come to the knowledge of the true God*. May the Lord bless our meditation.

1. What We Are To Know And Confess Concerning The True God

In John 1:18 we read, ¹⁸ *No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him.* In His Great Commission, in which Jesus commands us to make disciples of all nations, He says that we are to baptise them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. He does not say: in the names, but: *"in the name,"* signifying that there is only one God.

Scriptures throughout bear out the fact that there is but one God. While the heathen nations worshiped many deities, Moses calls to his people, ⁴ *Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one!*² By the mouth of Isaiah, God declares, ⁸ *I am the LORD, that is My name; And My glory I will not give to another, Nor My praise to carved images.*³ This is the testimony of St. Paul as written in 1 Corinthians 8:4 *... there is no other God but one. All other so-called gods are idols.*⁴

The same Scriptures, however, which teach us to confess but one God, speak of Him as the Triune God. Our Saviour commands us to baptise in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Here we have a clear proof that there are three distinct persons in one divine essence.

Divine attributes are given to each of these three persons in the Holy Trinity. It is on Scriptural grounds that we confess in the words of the Athanasian Creed, *“And among these three persons none is before or after another, none is greater or less than another, but all three persons are co-equal and co-eternal, and accordingly, as has been stated above, three persons are to be worshipped in one Godhead and one God is to be worshipped in three persons. Whoever wishes to be saved must think thus about the Trinity.”*

And continuing, the same Creed states, *“It is also necessary for eternal salvation that one faithfully believe that our Lord Jesus Christ became man, for this is the right faith, that we believe and confess that our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is at once God and man.”*

Our text informs us that *“When they [the eleven disciples] saw Him, they worshiped Him.”* They give divine honour to the risen Saviour. And Jesus accepted their homage.

We know how on a previous occasion Peter had confessed in the name of the Twelve, *“Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. ”*⁶⁹ *“Also we have come to believe and know that You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.”*⁵

Jesus’ resurrection from the dead was the greatest miracle, by which He proved Himself to be the eternal Son of the eternal Father. Those who deny the deity of Christ do not have the true God; for it is written in John 5:23 ²³ *“that all should honor the Son just as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent Him.*

Christ’s human nature is attested in our text, not only by the fact that He was seen by the Eleven, but also by His words, *“All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.”* According to His divine nature all power was His from all eternity. We read in John 1:1-3, ¹ *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.* ² *He was in the beginning with*

God. ³ All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made.

According to His human nature power and authority was given to Him. Jesus took upon Himself human nature that He might fulfil the holy Law as our Substitute and suffer what all people ought to have suffered because of their sins.

Jesus is the divinely ordained Saviour, and faith in Him is the only way to eternal life. This faith, however, is not the work of man, but the work of the Holy Spirit operating through the Gospel. No man can call Jesus Lord except by the Holy Spirit, the Third Person in the Holy Trinity.

This is a brief summary of what we are to know and to confess concerning God. The doctrine of the Holy Trinity is an article of faith. No person can fathom the mystery of the Holy Trinity. A god whom we could fathom could not be the infinite Maker and Preserver of all things.

We read in Romans 11:34-36, ³⁴ ***“For who has known the mind of the LORD? Or who has become His counselor?”*** ³⁵ ***“Or who has first given to Him And it shall be repaid to him?”*** ³⁶ ***For of Him and through Him and to Him are all things, to whom be glory forever.***

Oh, the debt of gratitude we owe God, who through the Scriptures has revealed Himself as the God of mercy and of love, by sending His only-begotten Son as our Saviour!

Our text also teaches us how we are to show our gratitude for having been blessed with the knowledge of the true God.

2. How We Are To Show Our Gratitude For Having Come To The Knowledge Of The True God.

The disciples had been blessed with the knowledge of the true God. Theirs was a great privilege in having Jesus as their Teacher. And now the Lord tells them to show their gratitude for having been blessed with the knowledge of the true God by leading others to the saving knowledge of the truth.

Jesus promised them His Holy Spirit, who would remind them of the words of Jesus and lead them into all truth. And the disciples went forth as witnesses of Jesus Christ.

We, too, are to be witnesses of Jesus Christ. That is to be our main purpose in life. We are to do all we can that the whole earth may be full of the knowledge of the Lord. We are to make disciples of all nations by baptising and by teaching.

Those who are not able to receive instruction, as is the case with infants, are to be received into Christ's kingdom by Holy Baptism. We read in Jeremiah that *they all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, says the LORD.*⁶ This means that it is incumbent upon us to train men who will do such teaching in an official capacity.

The call of the hour is to support missionary programs where ever we can. Examples include supporting our own congregation by attending church, teaching in Sunday School, confirmation instructions and other office bearers. There is also our website for people to visit and hear and read the Word of God.

Then there are other organisations that we can support. For example the Bible Society in Australia, the Trinitarian Bible Society, the Gideons, Open Doors, The Vine Project and many others.

The more we realise how great a debt we owe the Lord for having blessed us with the knowledge of the way of salvation, the greater will be our missionary zeal. And we are to teach the nations all things Christ has taught us. The entire counsel of God concerning the way of life is to be expounded, both the Law and the Gospel.

As an incentive to greater missionary zeal our Saviour adds the glorious promise, *and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the [world].* Since all power and authority is given to Jesus in heaven and earth, He is well able to crown our missionary efforts with success in spite of all opposition. His blessing accompanied the preaching of the disciples. And also today His Word shall not return unto Him void.

Let us therefore exhort one another to hold fast our profession of the true God in an age of scepticism and unbelief, and as children of the Light show our gratitude by leading others to the knowledge that leads to life eternal. Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep our hearts and minds, in Christ Jesus. Amen.

¹ Psalm 76:1-2

² Deuteronomy 6:4

³ Isaiah 42:8

⁴ 1 Corinthians 8:4-6

⁵ John 6:68-69

⁶ Jeremiah 31:34