

**“So You Thought You Knew God!”**  
**John 16:12-15; Holy Trinity Sunday, Father’s Day**  
**June 15, 2014**

Today we join with millions of other Christians around the globe to celebrate the Festival of the Holy Trinity.

It is on this day that the Church professes out loud to the whole world our belief that there really is only one, true and Triune God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; three distinct Persons in One Divine Being; Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer, Sustainer of our faith and Sustainer of our bodies, minds, and souls.

For centuries now, those entrusted with the sacred responsibility of instructing newcomers in the Christian faith have searched for just the right kind of illustration to help throw some much needed light on this very mysterious and inexplicable doctrine. Most everyone here has probably heard about the chemical formula H<sub>2</sub>O; how it is manifest in three different forms: solid, liquid, or gas—that is as ice, water, or steam, but essentially remains the very same substance in those three expressions of itself!

Next time you take an egg out of the refrigerator to scramble in the skillet for your morning breakfast, let it remind you of this great doctrine of the Holy Trinity! It has **three distinct parts**: an eggshell, an egg white, and an egg yolk, but altogether they only make up **one egg**.

Perhaps you haven’t even ever considered that the three-way light bulb is the first electrical attempt to create “mood” lighting. If you are sitting in your family room at night reading some very finely-printed material, by all means click up the wattage to 100. If a couple of nights later you are simply enjoying some conversation with other family members and friends, click down the wattage to 70. But if you are sitting in that same room, hoping to snuggle with your sweetie while some romantic music plays in the background, by all means click down the wattage to 30.

Have you ever stopped to think that no matter how well you and I, by the grace of God, may have come to know our God personally in this life that it is always possible for us to know him better and better and better!?!

Take St. Paul, for example, who wrote to the Corinthians one day saying in 2 Corinthians 12 that he had been given a super abundance of divine revelations by God in God’s self-revelation to him! He later writes to some friends of his living in that quaint little Roman colony of Philippi, however, that one of his most ambiguous pursuits in life is to get to know God better and better and better. He says, *“Whatever gain I had I count as loss for the surpassing worth of **KNOWING** Christ Jesus my Lord and being found in him, not having a righteousness of my own based on the law, but that which comes from God and depends on faith; that I may **KNOW** him, sharing in his sufferings, that if in any way possible I also may attain the resurrection of the dead!” (Philippians 3:7-11).*

### **I. WHAT IT MEANS TO “KNOW” GOD.**

When the Bible uses the term “to know,” it is incorporating into this concept something much more than merely having a certain amount of knowledge about God. To genuinely know God—with whatever knowledge concerning God we acquire—THIS KNOWLEDGE HAS TO BE ABSORBED NOT ONLY WITH THE INTELLECT BUT ALSO WITH THE HEART. IT MUST NOT BE MERELY FACTUAL, BUT ALSO EMOTIONAL. IT INVOLVES HAVING A VERY CLOSE, INTIMATE RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD, A FEELING OF HIS PRESENCE AND POWER IN OUR LIVES; an absolute certainty that he is our God and we are individually the sheep of his pasture. This is really what Jesus has in mind when he prays to his Heavenly Father in his High Priestly Prayer in on the night before he was crucified for our sins, and raised three days later for our justification: *“This is eternal life that men my **know you** the only true God and Jesus Christ whom you have sent” (John 17:3)!*

### **II. THE BIBLE ALSO ATTESTS TO SOMETHING WHICH THEOLOGICANS CALL THE NATURAL KNOWLEDGE OF GOD.**

**A. By looking at the visible world and universe all around us, we can certainly surmise that it had to come from somewhere; from someone with much greater powers than our own!**

When a human beings look at this marvelous planet and all the living things, as well as the inanimate things upon it, when they consider the reality of their own existence and that of their ancestors, they can rationalize with the gift of human reason that God has given to them that there must be a higher power out there somewhere who has made all of the marvelous things they see with their naked eye, even when they peer out there into their magnificent universe.

**There is no way that you are ever going to convince me on God's green earth that this watch I wear on my wrist, day after day, just fell into being on its own power without the gift of a watchmaker somewhere, at some point in time, having made it! And even if it was made by an automated machine, there had to be some type of engineer somewhere who designed it and who masterminded the technology behind that wonderful gift of automation.**

**I have read so many books** in my life that I can't even begin to know how many, but probably for some 99% percent of those books, I never personally met the author behind them, or have ever seen him or her face to face, but there had to be an author—someone who wrote each one.

Listen to **Psalm 14:1**, ***"Only the fool has said in his heart that there is no God!"***

In **Psalm 19**, we read: ***"The heavens declare the glory of God and the skies his handiwork!"***

In **Hebrews 3:4** we read, ***"Every house is built by someone, but the builder of all things is God!"***

In **Romans 1:19-20**, Paul writes: ***"For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. For his invisible attributes, namely his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse!"***

Moses has long been regarded as the author of the first five books of the Bible known as the Pentateuch; **Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy**. And Jesus himself certainly seems to reinforce this idea two times in the Gospels. In **Luke 16:31** our Lord says, ***"If they believe not Moses and the prophets, neither will they believe if someone should rise from the dead!"*** And again the risen Christ says to those broken-hearted disciples on the Road to Emmaus, ***"Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory. And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself!"*** (Luke 24:26-27)

Moses wasn't there at creation's dawn, but the Holy Spirit of God was there, and it was the Holy Spirit of God who inspired Moses to write down these words. You heard them in our Old Testament lesson today, ***"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth, and the earth was without form and void. And darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God hovered above the waters!"*** (Genesis 1:1-2)

The Spirit of God is convincing us here repeatedly of two great truths, that everything that can be seen with the physical eye has been made by God, and that it was made by God to be absolutely good.

And then we see evidence of the **Holy Trinity** in verse 26 in the opening chapter of the Bible. ***"Then God said, 'Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them!"***

"Let us!" "Let who?" "Let us God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit make man in our image!"

**B. The role of our conscience can also convince us that there is a higher power to whom we are responsible with what we do with our lives.**

Margaret Mead was one of this world's first great sociologists who pointed out the fact that wherever you go in this world, at any time in the history of this world, you will find evidence of all peoples, no matter how primitive, trying to make contact with the creative power behind this world and universe. And **conscience is the gift that separates human beings from animals. Some suggests that the human conscience is that tiny little part of the image of God still leaving its print on every human life, those this may be sliding down a slippery slope given the Bible's clear information that mankind's fall into sin resulted in his spiritual death completely.** I love what Paul says in Ephesians 2, *"But even when we were dead through our trespasses and sins, God who is rich in mercy, made us alive together with Christ and raised us up to be seated with him in the heavenly places, that in the coming ages he might show forth the immeasurable greatness of his kindness towards us in Christ Jesus!"*

But really friends, have you ever seen a rabbit take time to fold its paws in prayer? I mean some other rabbit than Bugs Bunny who appears in those animated cartoons because Elmer Fudd is in hot pursuit after him with his rifle because he was hoping to make some rabbit stew for supper!

Have you ever seen a lion piling up rocks on the continent of Africa, because it wants to build an altar to God to remember God's past faithfulness in dealing kindly with that lion? I haven't ever seen anything like that.

**Without the gift of conscience, we would never take the time to consider how our own actions may be impacting the lives of others all around us!** And without the gift of conscience every human being would say, **"I am going to do what I believe is best for myself, and who cares what happens to anyone else!"** And this is very recipe for so much of the kind of selfish greed, and thoughtless pursuit of wealth and happiness, resulting in so much discord, strife, and anarchy that we see present all around us in such great abundance yet today!

**II. JESUS HERE IS REMINDING US OF THE REVEALED KNOWLEDGE OF GOD!**

But the most important knowledge of God, namely who he is, what he is like, even his name, is beyond us. Further, how can we—sinners that we are—be reconciled to Him and have a feeling of closeness to him? Actually none of this can be obtained on our own. This has to be made known to us by the Spirit of Truth. This is the point that Jesus is making in our sermon text today, words he spoke to his broken-hearted disciples in that Upper Room there in Jerusalem on the night before he died on that cross, to make a "vicarious," that is a "substitutionary" satisfaction for all of our sins!

This is the point that Jesus is making when he says, *"When the Spirit of Truth comes he will guide you into all truth. He will take what is mine and declare it unto you. He will guide you into all truth. He will glorify me!"* Herein lies the secret in genuinely knowing God. The Holy Spirit directs us to Jesus Christ in such a way that we glorify him. Jesus Christ is glorified in us when the Holy Spirit guides us into all the truth that we need to know about him and which we firmly believe. Basically the truths are these: (1) God saw all of us in our sins that automatically separated us from him! (2) Because he is holy and perfect; nothing tainted with sin can ever come into his presence. (3) There is no way that anyone of us could ever have removed these sins on our own. If left by ourselves, we would all be lost. (4) But God loves us. He to adopt every one of us into his own family to genuinely and legitimately become his own child; his own children. (5) Consequently, he sent his only-begotten Son into the world and laid on him the iniquity of us all. (6) Even though he was human born of the Virgin Mary, yet being conceived by the Holy Spirit, he was also the only-begotten, divine Son of God—and could take upon himself our sins and the great penalty for the same. This he did through his death on the cross. Hence all who believe in him are no longer separated from God, but are rather united with him. We are his own. We are saved. We are now in a right

relationship with him. And one of the best ways that we can know that yes, we truly know him and are known by him, is when we are willing to confess now our sins, not only to him, but also one another and to receive his forgiveness not only for ourselves, but also to share with one another!

**"If your beloved Son, O God, had not to earth descended,  
And in our mortal flesh and blood had not sin's power ended.  
Then this poor, wretched soul of mine, in hell eternally would pine, because of my transgressions!"**

**But now I find sweet peace and rest, despair no more reign o'er me.  
No more am I by sin oppressed, for Christ has borne sin for me.  
Upon the cross for me he died, that reconciled I might abide, with you my God forever!**

**My guilt O Father, who have laid, on Christ your Son my Savior!  
Lord Jesus, you my debt have paid and gained for me God's favor.  
O Holy Spirit fount of grace, the good in me to you I trace, in faith and hope preserve me!"**  
(LSB 568:1, 2, and 5)

**Friends, today is Father's Day and one of the hallmarks of Jesus' life and ministry is that he taught us to call God our Father. Jesus said, "The Son of Man is come to seek and save that which is lost." And then he invited us to think of this whole world and everyone in it as a humongous orphanage in which people by nature are adrift from the Father and squabbling with one another. And the Gospel declares that God our Heavenly Father has love in his heart for every one of us. And he sent his Son into the world to reconcile us to his Heavenly Father, that we might be adopted by his grace into his very own family, as his children again. In *Galatians 4:4-7* we read, "When the time had fully come, God sent forth his Son born of a woman, born under the law to redeem all who were under the law, that we might receive adoption as your sons. Wherefore, we cry, 'Abba, Father!'"**

St. John also says in I John 4:1, **"See what love the Father has lavished upon us for that is what we are, the very children of God!"**

**But for some reason there are always those people who will not respond to the offer of God's love and grace being extended to the whole human race in Jesus Christ. Don't you remember how Jesus wept over the city of Jerusalem, shortly before his Palm Sunday welcome, saying, "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, killing the prophets and stoning them that are sent to you. How often would I have gathered you children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings and you will not willing!?"**

The Bible teaches us that every one of us is born into this world as someone who is fundamentally flawed. We all have inherited the original sin of our parents and our grandparents before them! And we can't correct the problem ourselves, simply by our repeated resolves to always do better!

That's like saying the transmission in your car is going out, but don't worry, you are committed to fixing the problem by becoming a better driver! **What's wrong with the car is a problem that can't be fixed by you, no matter how good of a driver you become.** But I believe God is here today to correct my situation and yours, if only I and you will allow him to do that very things.

**I know it is only a hypothetical situation, but let's suppose that later today, after you have gone home and enjoyed a wonderful noon meal, that there is a knock on your front door.** You look through the peep hole, and you see two rather attractive persons standing there dressed in smartly attire. Your fear, is that they are two people who are hoping to come into your living room this afternoon, and share with you some important tenets of their religious beliefs, when nothing could be farther than they truth.

**They heard that you were here to celebrate with us at Mount Olive Church this morning the Festival of the Holy Trinity.** They have some important questions that they want to ask you about the Triune God: **“Who is he? Where is he? What has he done? Do you believe that he really exists?”** And in regards to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Person of the Holy Trinity they ask you: **“Do you believe that Jesus Christ really is the Son of God? What is his relationship really to God the Father and God the Son? What is he talking about really, when he calls people, by his resurrection power, to become his disciples still today?”**

I am sure that many of you would have no problem whatsoever giving some very Biblically faithful, solid, satisfactory answers to those questions! So, you thought you knew God! Perhaps, a few of you, might not find the answers you were hoping you might have just as readily.

**I like the story I heard about one particular Anglican cleric who invited the children to gather before the altar on the Festival of the Holy Trinity—for a children’s sermon.** He proceeded to take three large matches, the kind that are used to light the charcoal in the grill. He ask the boys and girls, “How many are there?”

“Three,” they replied.

“Then,” he held them all together and lit them. “How many flames he asked them?”

“One,” they replied. All was good in expressing the concept of three distinct Persons in one divine Godhead, until the rector at one of the most prominent parishes in London, then proceeded to try and separate those burning matches again, when unfortunately he caught the altar cloths on fire!

Fortunately, he had a backup plan, just in case, for some reason that those matches did not light! He had three clear glasses poised also on the altar, into which he was going to pour water from one large pitcher, three glasses of water. When the altar caught on fire, he quickly took that pitcher of water and thoroughly doused the flaming altar with it, completely putting out the fire.

While do so, he joyfully sang, “Holy, holy, holy, all the saints adore thee, casting down their golden crowns around the glassy sea!” Water? Glasses? Sea? Casting down their golden crowns around the glassy sea!

Not everyone who was there that morning made the connection, but some of them did!” Amen