

Sermon for Sunday, May 28, 1972 by Andrew A. Jumper, D.D., Pastor  
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"THE THREE-FOLD LOVE OF GOD"  
St. John 3:1-15

Text: "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."  
St. John 3:14, 15

Many years ago the King of England travelled to Norwich to lay the foundation stone for a new hospital. All of the schools in the neighborhood declared a holiday and all of the children turned out to see the king and to sing for him. After King Edward had paraded past the thousands of boys and girls, one of the school teachers found one of the little girls crying as though her heart would break. "Why are you crying dear," asked the teacher, "Did you not get to see the king?" "Yes," sobbed the little girl, "but the King did not see me." What a wonderful parable this is on the need within the souls of men--the need to be seen by the King of Heaven. We need to know that we are not just one of the crowd as the Master passes by. We need to know that we do not pass unnoticed by the God of all creation as the parade of life moves past.

As we come today to the celebration of Trinity Sunday, this great doctrine of the Christian Church that God is one yet three persons, we need to have it's deep significance brought home again to us. So notice first of all that this great doctrine means that God cares. God is first of all represented in the Trinity as God the Father. What a wonderful thing it is to know this morning that God is like a Father, a father who cares for his children. It means that we are not just one of the crowd--unseen and unimportant as the King passes by. But it means that as our father, his eyes search the crowd, singling each of us out to let us know that he sees us and that he cares.

Our Bible says that not even a sparrow shall fall to the ground without the knowledge of God. Sometimes we get to feeling that what we do and what we say and what we are is not very important. We get to feeling that after all we are pretty insignificant. How could it be that with all of the people in the world, that God could be concerned about any particular one. Yet, this, first of all, is what the doctrine of the Trinity has to say to us--it says that God cares. As Jesus put it, "Are ye not worth more than many sparrows?" There is no person so insignificant, his troubles so trivial, but that God is concerned for him and cares for him.

One of the great psychiatrists of our time tells us that the greatest problem among people today is their sense of insignificance. Take, for example, the doctrine of communism that rules a tremendous portion of the world today. Within this philosophy of life the individual counts for nothing--the individual is unimportant and insignificant and only the common good counts for anything. And if your good and this "common good" conflict, the individual is crushed down. Or again, look at the tremendous power--the unthinkable awesomeness of the atom. In the face of such cataclysmic forces, the significance of the individual fades into nothingness. Yes, indeed, man's sense of his own insignificance becomes a destructive force within his soul.

Yet, it is right at this point that the doctrine of the Trinity means so much to the Christian, for through it God the Father tells us that he cares for us. As one poet has put it:

Oh, this life is not all sunshine,  
Some days darkest clouds disclose

There's a cross for every joy-bell  
And a thorn for every rose.  
But the cross is not so grievous,  
Nor the thorn the rose-bud wears,  
And the clouds have silver linings  
When we know our Father cares.

I don't know what your problems are this morning. I could not possibly know what your burdens are nor what great decisions you face. It would be impossible for me to share with you the great burden of your sins and temptation that life brings to you. Yet, I do know this. I know that you are not facing those problems alone, that you are not having to carry those burdens on your own weak shoulders, for I know that God cares for you.

O, Let God into your life this morning. Life is too hard, life is too short to go it alone. So many people are lonely and brokenhearted today and if only they knew that God cares. Perhaps you have heard of Buckner Orphanage located in Dallas, one of the largest in America. Dr. Buckner, the man who started the institution, must have been a wonderful, grand soul for all of the little children in his orphanage loved him like a father. Often he was gone for many weeks trying to raise funds for his little children, but when they heard that he was coming home, excitement swept the whole orphanage. All of the children would put on their best clothes and pick bouquets of flowers to present to Dr. Buckner. Among the group was a little half-witted girl. She did not ever know the difference between weeds and flowers. When Dr. Buckner finally arrived, the children would press around him--each trying to be the first to kiss him or to present their flowers. But always Dr. Buckner seemed to be looking for someone. Then his eyes would find her, hanging back timidly on the edge of the crowd with her pitiful little handful of weeds. He would push through the boys and girls and kneel beside this poor little waif. Taking her in his arms first of all, he would whisper words of love and comfort to her and she knew that he cared.

O my friends, so God cares for us. Though we offer him but pitiful weeds in return, he seeks us out and loves us just the same. Let God love you this morning--let His loving, tender care enfold you--let Him wipe away your tears and take you in his arms. Yes, the doctrine of the Trinity means this: It means that God cares for us--each and every one of us--he cares for you.

But go on to note secondly that this great doctrine of the Trinity means not only that God cares, but that He also shares--I dare say there is not a person here this morning but that he carries some problem in his heart, some burden in his soul. Yet, here in this great doctrine God comes to tell us that He has a share in our burdens. Our Scripture for this morning says that "Even as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the son of man be lifted up." How can you explain that except in terms of God sharing our sin? Our Bible also says, just a few verses further on, "For God so loved the world that he gave his only son." If it were not for Jesus this morning what would you do with your sins? You could not hide them, for, as the Psalmist says, "Whether shall I flee from thy presence..." You could not deny them, for God knows the inmost secrets of the human heart. You could not pay for them and live, for the wages of sin is death. Yes what can you do with your sins this morning? What are you going to do with your sins in the great day of Judgment when you stand before the throne of God to be judged? There is only one thing to do with sin, and that is to let God share them. It is hard to think of Calvary and Jesus suffering there. Yet, this is the kind of God who cares for us--one who is willing to share our sin and shame, one who is willing to go to dark Gethsemane for us.

There is not a one of us here this morning that can honestly look at our souls and say that we are proud of what we find there. None of us have been so good, lived so pure, acted so kindly but that we need the redeeming blood of Jesus Christ to wipe away the scarlet stains of our sins.

Whoever you are this morning, let God share your sin. Sin can destroy you--it can sap your spiritual energy and fling you like flotsam upon the dreary shores of despair. But let God who cares for you also share your sin. We have a hymn we sing that goes, "Just as I am without one plea, except thy blood was shed for me... O lamb of God I come." Will you come to Jesus today. Let his blood wash away your sins, let God share the crushing weight of your sin that will destroy you.

Many years ago a ship named the Empress of Ireland went down. Aboard her were 130 Salvation Army men and 109 of them were drowned. Not a one of the men who died that day had on a life preserver. Each had taken his off when it was discovered that there were not enough to go around and had given it to someone else. As they gave away their preservers which meant life to them, they said, "Take our belts, we can die better than you." Yes, they could die because they had found a Saviour who shared their sin, who died for their sins. Your sins will destroy you until you let Jesus share them with you, "for whosoever believeth in him shall not perish, but have eternal life."

Then finally, let us go on to note that not only does the doctrine of the Trinity mean that God cares--not only does it mean he shares--but it also means he bears us through life. Have you ever stopped to think about the bearing power of God? How do you suppose Stephen ever faced stoning, or Paul and all the others--how do you suppose they were able to face the torments and tortures that they endured for Christ's sake? It was simply the bearing power of God--the power of God that works within the human soul and sees us through the toughest times.

Not long ago I read about a young man who lost his wife in an automobile accident. The couple had a little three year old girl. After the funeral the father was putting the little girl to bed, awkwardly trying to button her pajamas. Suddenly the lights went out and the little girl, frightened by the sudden darkness, pleaded for him to take her in his arms. As they sat in the darkness, the child snuggled in her daddy's arms and whispered in his ear "It's awful dark; but I'm not afraid, because my Daddy's here." The grief-stricken man buried his face in his daughter's hair and as the tears came, he said, "Yes, dear, it is dark indeed; but I am not afraid either because my father is here, too." Yes, the bearing power of God--the power to see us through the toughest times--the power to carry us over the greatest tragedies that life can bring. And if you do not have God's spirit within you when such times come, I do not know how you shall bear it.

Yes, this is the meaning of the Trinity--a God who cares for each one of us; a God who shares the sins of us all; and a God who bears us through the toughest times.

Put your life in God's hands today--the God who is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit--and though life be hard and dark, you need not fear, for God is there. Do you remember how David put it? "Yea though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear not evil, for thou art with me."