

The Biggest One of All



Our faith is replete with mysteries and wonders. This week we reflect on the biggest one of all.

Five brief verses, that's all we get. It's a tiny gospel for such a big message... the very nature of God... the Blessed Trinity. We have no MRI images or DNA analysis of the Divinity. So, short of heaven, the word of Jesus is the only clear window we have into the heart of God. It tests our faith and doubtless it was meant to. But Jesus precisely packs so much into every word that it is more than enough for the faithful.

The core of this gospel is a passage that has come to be called The Great Commission. In his final charge to the disciples, Jesus bids them: *Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son; and of the Holy Spirit.* Note the significance of the singular. Jesus empowers them in the "name" of God... not in the plural "names" of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. That's because they are one. God is one... three, yet one.

This mystery is the core belief of Christianity. And Christianity is a faith not a philosophy. We live and act as Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ would have us do... not because some saintly sage has cobbled together a code of conduct to make this a better world. We simply follow God in Christ. And that means we don't get to call ourselves Christians and then disregard his word. This mystery of the Trinity is not an ornamental attachment to our faith. It is nothing less than the essence of God, as revealed by Christ, himself. So it's not an option and it's not up for a vote.

We humbly follow *The Word*... Jesus Christ, God's love incarnate, come among us for our salvation, the Son of the Father, the Harbinger of the Holy Spirit. We know this because Jesus has said it is so. And we trust in Jesus. Centuries of theological brilliance have been expended, bottomless wells of analogies have been drained... and yet the Trinity remains a mystery of faith, inaccessible to human reason alone, as God intended it to be.

Christ's last words to us, his invocation of the Trinity, are not a valedictory flourish. They are a last loving lesson, a final infusion of wisdom... wise beyond our human comprehension, yet simple and enduring enough to inspire the lives of countless Christians down the ages. As John Wesley wisely observed: "Bring me a worm that can comprehend a man, and I will show you a man that can comprehend the Triune God." And yet the Trinity is, was and ever will be. Outside of the context of faith, it is a concept we can never get comfortable with. In the context of faith it is the source of all serenity... the anchor of our hope... the heart of our love. In the Trinity we know God loves us. He made us. He saved us. He abides with us.

From Augustine to Aquinas, from Kung to Merton, of all the great souls who have probed this greatest mystery of all, CS Lewis speaks to me with down-to-earth logic. In *Beyond Personality* he wrote: "All sorts of people are fond of repeating that: 'God is love.' But the words have no meaning unless God is at least two persons. If God was only a single person, then before the world was made he was not love." The mutual love of Father, Son and Holy Spirit clearly transcends time and stands as testament to our Triune God. Three in One... One in Three... Creator, Redeemer, Abider... through the prism of faith the beauty is sublime; the symmetry is exquisite. In faith the toughest question becomes our greatest comfort. In faith our response to the biggest mystery is not bewilderment. It is adoration.