

Sermon: Knowing Father, Son and Holy Spirit

Scripture: John 17:2-3

Sunday, August 30, 2020

Last Sunday we started with the opening of Jesus' High priestly prayer in which he prays for his glorification. We said that this was his code for His plan which was to empty out his glory completely which would result in God being glorified on earth Satan had robbed God of His glory. As God's agents I had said the application for our lives is that we are to make bringing God glory wherever we operate, as the first project of our lives. But to do that we too might have to do some emptying out. However whatever emptying out we are willing to do, whatever cost we bear for executing God's will, will be returned to us many fold in the life to come.

Now within the first 5 verses of Jesus' opening there were two verses we skipped over last Sunday. It has to do with the meaning of eternal life. Let me read it again. ***“For you granted him authority over all people that he might give eternal life to all those you have given him. ³ Now this is eternal life: that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent”***. This is such a loaded two sentences that I decided they deserved to be a focus just by themselves. Because Jesus is giving us the very definition of eternal life here. And part of that definition involves having two personal relationships. One with the Father and the other with the Son. This involves wrestling once again with the Trinity and so today I am going to focus on these words of Jesus, when he says, ***this is eternal life that they know the only true God and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.***

Now what about the Holy Spirit you may ask? Well, Jesus does not mention it here but He had already introduced to us the Holy Spirit when he talked about being Born Again way back in chapter 3 of John. There he says, in 3:5, ***“Very truly I tell you, no one can***

enter the kingdom of God unless they are born of water and the Spirit". Now if you are entering the kingdom of God, you are entering eternal life because everything that is of God is essentially eternal. Spirit birth, means allowing the Holy Spirit to enter and take root inside you and allowing the Spirit of God more and more room to expand inside of you helping the old self to gradually fade away while the new self develops more and more enabling you to become more and more like Jesus. This is how your spirit would relate to the Holy Spirit.

But then there is the matter that Jesus talks about in today's passage which is getting to know God the Father and God the Son. What does this mean? To understand this, we need to understand the difference between God the Father and God the Son.

Let's start with who God the Father is. God the Father is the source of all authority within the Godhead. No one can see God the Father. I Tim 6:16 puts it this way, ***"He alone is immortal and dwells in unapproachable light. No one has ever seen Him, nor can anyone see Him"***. When Moses asks God if he could see God's face in Ex 33:20 God says, ***"You cannot see My face, because no one can see My face and live"***. God the father dwells in unapproachable light and cannot be seen by anybody and live.

Now the only reason why we know anything about God the Father is because Jesus Christ has revealed Him to us. John 1:18 says, ***"No one has ever seen God, but the one and only Son, who is Himself God and is at the Father's side, has made Him known."***

A quick aside. Every time you see the prophets in the OT encountering God, they tell us that they have seen the "glory of God", never the actual person of God because they knew that no one could see God and live. Beyond that there are a few instances of people like Abraham having encounters with the "angel of the Lord" or the angel of Elohim" in the OT, which is about 17 times. These appearances are sometimes referred to as Christophanies or pre-incarnation appearances of Jesus Christ in the Old Testament.

In the New Testament, this mysterious figure of the Old Testament is revealed as Jesus Christ, Son of God and God made flesh. He is the form of God that human beings can see and still live.

Now the question is, if God the Father dwells in unapproachable light and his God the son was the visible manifestation of the invisible God, the question is how do we get to know them both? Let's start with the Son. Now John 1 also says that the Son is the Word of God made flesh. When you read the Word in verses like Col 1:16 and John 1:3 you can know about the Son that, "**All things were created in Him and for Him**". Read John 1 and you can know that Jesus Christ is "**Word become flesh**". Read the Gospels and you can know what Jesus taught and did. You can know that He was lifted up on the cross and became a perfect sacrifice for your sins and mine. You can know that He rose again. You can know that he ascended to heaven and sent His spirit to empower the church to execute His plan of expanding the kingdom of God on earth. You can know that He is coming back. But all that knowing is like reading the biography of Abraham Lincoln and saying you know Abraham Lincoln. By reading a biography you will know a lot of information about an individual but it is not the same as knowing that individual personally, isin't?

To know someone personally you have to have a relationship with that person. If it is the most intimate of earthly relationships you give that person your time, you live life together and allow the trajectory of your life itself to be shaped just because of this persons involvement in your life, right? Think about your spouse's impact on your life if you were married or your best friend if your single. Or think of the parent-child relationship. In your most intimate earthly relationships you will not just know what they would put on a resume, you would know what they would like, how they think, their hopes and dreams, you would know where they are from time to time, what they are doing and many other things right?

So the question is how would you know this level of detail about Father and Son. Now because of the prior work of the Holy Spirit and assuming you have been Born Again, you can begin to have conversations with the Father and Son. This is what prayer is about. We pray to Jesus and the Heavenly Father and we wait to hear back from him.

But now we are confronted with a challenge. How do we know Jesus and the Father? Jesus paints these like it is knowing two different people. So I am going to address the difference in two ways. The first is to think about the difference in the conversations we have with Jesus and our heavenly Father. To get there, think about your parents for a minute. When you were growing up, if you were like me you always thought of your parents as a unit. At the same time, for certain things you tended to go to your mom and for other things you would go to your dad. In my case if I wanted a particular food for my birthday I would go to my mom. If I fell down and bruised my knees which was almost every time I played outside I would go to my dad because he was the one who was good at dressing wounds and in general making any mess right 😊 Within the God head we have a similar kind of dynamic. When I am working on myself and my sins and what I want to become, my dialogue is with my Savior who died for my sins, Jesus Christ. When I am thinking of the larger agenda of God or the beauty of creation or God's plan for the world, my conversation is with my heavenly Father. When I am thinking of the spiritual battles we are in, I am thinking of all of them. It is like we have God the Father the source of all authority and power to go to for some instances, the Redeemer and Saviour to God through in some instances and the Holy Spirit to be our medium and translator.

But here is the part that might be confusing to some. So if God the Father, God the Son and God the Spirit are all persons, and we have to have a relationship with 3 different persons, all of whom are divine, is that not like having a relationship with three Gods? How are they still one God? This is the puzzle of the Trinity that many people will ask

you and you have to be ready to give an answer. So let me bring you a perspective that will put you in a position to come closer to the mystery of the Trinity.

Remember that God is the creator of the universe and the Persons who said in Gen 1:26, ***let us make man in our image***? What that means is that the Persons of the God head, live outside of the created universe. We experience the universe mostly in four dimensions, right? The 3 dimensions of space and the fourth dimension of time. So where does God live? The ancients called the dwelling place of God as up near the stars somewhere. But today we think of the dwelling place of God in a higher dimension.

Now I am going to get into some geometry and explain a little this idea of dimensions. Remember a simple line is said to be 1 dimensional, a surface like a page is 2 dimensional because it has a length and a width, a cube is 3 dimensional because it has height in addition to length and width. Now you can describe a 3D object in 2D. But to do that you have to have at least 3 views of that 3D object to be complete. Arlis does this kind of drawing for a living so he knows what I am talking about. To describe a 3 dimensional object on a 2 dimensional page you need at least its top view and two side views. This is the minimum number of views by the way. In other words when you are describing something that dwells in a higher dimension from the perspective of a lower dimension, you need a lot more views to describe the fullness of a single object in a higher dimension.

In the same way, because the fullness of the personhood of God who exists in a higher dimension than us, we need three persons of God, even to get a glimpse of the fullness of the person of God who is a higher order being than us.

So for us to have eternal life, it is about preparing to live in a higher ordered universe. And so Jesus says, this is eternal life, that we know the person of the Father, the source of all authority and giver of the blue prints of the universe and plan of salvation, we have to know the Son who is the executor of all the blue prints and the one who has

been given all authority in heaven and earth by the Father and we have to live in the power of the Holy Spirit who is our helper, advocate, communication line and translator to the Father and Son.

May we grow in our relationship with each person of the Triune God so that we can grow in our intimacy with the one higher order being of God and experience the joy of eternal life, even right now on this side of eternity. Let us pray.

A cube in 3D

That same cube unwrapped to describe in 2 dimensions.

