

## The Trinity; The Jesus Perspective

Years ago I taught a Senior High Sunday School Class and the topic of the day was the Trinity. After I completed my presentation and asked for discussion one of the students said, "I don't understand why people care about this stuff. All it does is turn something that ought to be simple into something complex."

Now that I am a minister I realize that the student was correct. In fact those of us who study theology make it so complicated that we're not at all sure we understand the Trinity ourselves. In fact two minutes into any sermon that I might present, every first grade graduate in the congregation figures out that  $1+1+1$  doesn't equal 1, after which I doubt that they listen to another word I have to say on the subject.

And, that's all good except when we speak of the Trinity we are talking about the heart and soul of the Christian faith. We're talking about a God who empties God's-self, takes on the form of a servant, gives up his spirit, and is crucified for us. In short, we are talking about Jesus.

To understand this we need to start in a most unlikely place...the Old Testament...and ask ourselves, "What is the sin that keeps getting the Israelites in trouble all throughout the Old Testament?" The answer is "idolatry". Any Old Testament prophet can tell you that we humans desire a God who acts and thinks like us. The temptation to remake God in our own image is seductive and universal.

So, what kind of God do we make for ourselves? Certainly, a God of power. Why do we want this kind of God? Because we wouldn't mind having that kind of power ourselves and since getting it hasn't always worked out for us, we would sure like to know that someone who has that kind of power has our backs.

The problem with this particular form of idolatry is that when we speak of God in terms of power, we imply that human power is a form of godliness, and that those with the most power are the most like God. Isn't this what kings and despots and dictators have said throughout the centuries. "You have to listen to me because God wants order around here and God has blessed and empowered and ordained me to make sure that we all stay in line."

And, this is where Jesus comes in. Because we can't help ourselves and we continue to define the word "God" in terms of power, God decides to come show us what and who God really is... what God's power is really all about. God becomes human in Jesus of Nazareth and on the cross paints us a picture of the very heart of God. Jesus shows us that God's power is the power of self-sacrificial love. And, because Jesus is God, the story of Jesus on the cross becomes the truest definition of the word "God".

This is why the early church insisted that God is triune. If we take a deep dive into who God really is we find that God is eternally the Father of the Crucified One. If you want to know about God's ongoing presence among us then we must look to the Spirit of the Risen Christ. But, most important, if you want to know why we make such a big fuss about Jesus, it's because in him and him alone we see and come to know God. In other words, the Doctrine of the Trinity isn't an attempt to turn something that ought to be simple into an incomprehensible mystery. No, it's God's way of telling idolaters like you and me to pay attention and focus on Jesus.

