

The Feast of the Holy Trinity – 2020

Genesis 1:1-2:4a

Acts 2:14a, 22-36

Matthew 28:16-20

Father's Day is two weeks from today and I'm getting stoked. Dads love Father's Day. Truth be told, we love getting gifts. We get a kick out of a new sweatshirt or a box of golf balls. We love receiving a few cigars or a colorful tie. We love a new pair of work gloves or a bag of fancy coffee beans. We love being made a fuss over. We love the hamburger for dinner, or the lasagna. We love the cheesecake or the chocolate and peanut butter ice cream that tells us we are special. We love the cards and the calls and the hugs and the smiles. Dads certainly appreciate gifts but gifts are just tokens. Do you know what is the best gift that a dad could receive on Father's Day? It's you, it's his children themselves, it's family just as it is. Do you know how to give of yourself to your father? That's the best gift. Give your humor, your stories, your perspective, your dreams, give yourself, share who you are with your father – that's the best gift.

The best fathers give themselves to their children – in a whole host of ways. Fathers labor for their household, they provide guidance and security, they teach and they model and they sacrifice for those who depend on them. Jesus said: "It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35). What is the best thing that God has to give? What is the best thing that God gives to each of us? He gives Himself. That's the reason why it is more blessed to give than to receive – because our blessed God is a giving God. Everything about the Holy Trinity is self-giving. Self-giving is the art of love. Self-giving is the apex of love. Who God is and what He has done establishes what is blessed in this life, establishes what is good and holy and true. Self-giving; that is our Triune God. You have been drawn into His life. **He** has drawn you into His life. The blessed One has given Himself to you. In a remarkable act of love, the Triune God gives of Himself – God the Father gives, God the Son gives, God the Holy Spirit gives and you, you are the blessed recipient.

In the beginning, when God's creative will moved Him to speak, you were in His mind – believe it! Creation is the beginning of self-giving. Let there be light! God saw that it was good. For whom was the light good? What, precisely, made the light good? It was an extension of His person, but God did not need created light. It was good because it came from Him, but without a purpose, without one to receive it, it would be empty, vain. God the Father spoke the Word, God the Son was the Word spoken, the Word by which the Father creates (John 1:3), and God the Holy Spirit hovered over the waters – the Holy Trinity, giving of themselves that you might be blessed. All around you on this day, literally all around you is the love of God – this created world in which you live.

God the Father loves this world and so He gives. In its fallen state – fallen, corrupt, vile and death riddled – God so loved this world that He gave His only-begotten Son (John 3:16). Self-giving reaches a new level as the eternal Son of the eternal Father is made man. This is no mere token; this is God sharing everything He has, sharing everything He is. Love as you can only imagine exists between the Father and the Son, and the Father sent the Word to be made flesh... sent the Word to suffer and die for you. To save you; forcefully, decidedly; to save sinful you. Only the Son could pay the colossal price for sin and He needed real humanity, He needed flesh

and blood, just like yours, to pay. Self-giving reaches its apex as Jesus empties Himself as a sacrifice to His Father. The book of Hebrews states it in sublime terms. To purify us from dead works, to bring us to serve the living God, Jesus offered Himself, through the eternal Spirit, to God as a sacrifice without blemish (Hebrews 9:14). Self-giving is the art of love, the apex of love and Jesus gave Himself on the cross to His Father, He gave Himself to you.

God the Holy Spirit gives Himself to you, He lives within you, makes you holy by His presence, brings you the righteousness of Christ. The Spirit does not give worldly religious pabulum or inspiration for self-help or aloof advice about how you might make your life better. Your problems are tougher than that. You face a just God who holds out His law and demands that you keep it. He doesn't barter with you. God doesn't hold out a scale and weigh your happy qualities against your sinful acts, then when you are found wanting give you some extra credit assignment. You have earned death, hell. You do not have the ability to fix this problem. God intervenes. God the Holy Spirit is not going to bring you a partial solution to your life and death issue. He brings unassailable life. He brings the righteousness of Christ and deposits it into your account. He breathes the fire of faith into your stone-cold heart and makes it beat with Christ's resurrection. The Holy Spirit is practiced in the art of self-giving. He enjoys the art. He enjoys the giving. Why? Because the eternal God **is** love and you are the object of His divine affection. The Holy Trinity – love in action.

You are a Christian. You have been drawn into that love. You know what it is to give of yourself – to give aid to those in need, to give comfort to those who grieve – the comfort you have received from Christ. You are a Christian. You have known self-giving and the beauty of it. You have given of yourself to others when it was easy, when you were light of heart and inspired by God to do it with joy. You have given of yourself to others when it was hard, when you pridefully felt that the other was not worthy of your service or when you were fighting your own selfishness. Sadly, you have failed to give when it was clear that to do so was God's will. Guilt may have come upon you afterward and you looked for an excuse, some rationale that would serve as a balm for your hard heart in which to take comfort. The truth is, you forget. You forget that it was your feet that were washed in the Upper Room on the night when Christ was betrayed. You forget that in love, the Greatest became the Least for you. In love, Christ the King bent down and with water and blood washed your body in baptism, washed your soul in His sacrifice, washed your sins away with His self-giving salvation (In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit). You forget and the world is darkened; be it ever so little, when you forget the world is darkened.

So much taking; so little giving. The world is lost. The unbelieving world knows nothing of blessedness. It knows anger and power and vindictive violence. I am glad that we are living at this moment. I am glad for the church for this time is opportunity. The Gospel is alive (living and active) and it is built for this moment. God is still at His work (John 5:17). Christ is still among us as One who serves (Luke 22:27). The Holy Trinity continues their self-giving work of bringing light on those who dwell in darkness (1 Peter 2:9). This is a blessed moment for the church. We have something to give. We offer forgiveness. We offer hope. We offer a future. These gifts stem from Christ and His Word, Christ and His empty tomb. The church is blessed when it gives what it has received. Freely we have received. We are saved by grace. Freely we give (Matthew 10:8). We bend our knees and wash the wounds of the soul that every human

being has. Christ's atoning sacrifice is the balm for every guilt, every shame, every pain of conscience that afflicts those who hurt. We, Christ's church, we give what the world cannot give. We stand as a lighthouse on this hill, beckoning all of the broken to come and receive the mercy of Christ, the self-giving love of the Father, and the wondrous agency of the Holy Spirit.

We give ourselves to Him – the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. It is what He desires. Simply us – He desires our hearts, our faith, our trust, our hope and our persons. We are a treasure to Him. He does not need or seek tokens. He seeks us; that is what we will give. “I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect” (Romans 12:1-2). What is the will of God? That we should receive what He, in love, gives. What does He give? “Take, eat, this is my body. Take, drink, this is my blood.” Blessed be the Giver – the Lord of the Cross and the Lord of this table. Blessed be the receivers – the beloved of Christ the King.