

Crowned with the Great Commission

Psalm 8

Matthew 28: 16-20

June 4, 2023

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Psalm 8

O Lord, our Sovereign, how majestic is your name in all the earth! You have set your glory above the heavens.

Out of the mouths of babes and infants you have founded a bulwark because of your foes, to silence the enemy and the avenger.

When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars that you have established;

what are human beings that you are mindful of them, mortals that you care for them?

Yet you have made them a little lower than God, and crowned them with glory and honor.

You have given them dominion over the works of your hands; you have put all things under their feet, all sheep and oxen, and also the beasts of the field,

the birds of the air, and the fish of the sea, whatever passes along the paths of the seas.

O Lord, our Sovereign, how majestic is your name in all the earth!

Matthew 28: 16-20

Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them.

When they saw him, they worshipped him; but some doubted. And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

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I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Praise God from whom all blessings flow; praise him, all creatures here below; praise him above, ye heavenly host; praise Father, Son and Holy Ghost. Amen.

Today, on Trinity Sunday, we celebrate all three aspects, persons, of our God: Creator, Christ, and Holy Ghost as we sing each week in the doxology, and as we know in the waters of baptism. We sing, we say, the words but certainly not because we -nor anyone else—truly understand the paradoxical math equation at the heart of our theology. How is God One, but also Three? And where is the Trinity in our Scriptures?

Father, Son and Holy Ghost. Creator, Christ and Redeemer. The Triune God. However we describe the Trinity, we will not find a direct biblical passage that names each person and says that they are one or that they are equal to each other. Yet that doctrine is at the very center of our faith beliefs.

The Trinity is not directly biblical but rather grew out of our faith ancestors' experiences of God. Our Jewish faith ancestors knew and worshipped the One God, God the Creator,

Yahweh, who had a covenant with Abraham and Sarah, who gave the Law through Moses, who promised “you shall be my people, and I will be your God.”ⁱ

Jesus was a man of God, of Abba, a wise teacher, miracle worker and compassionate healer, who many times referred to himself as the ‘Son of Man,’ which could simply mean ‘human being’ or be as sacred as ‘Messiah.’ In John’s Gospel we hear the first hint of a more complex God, “the Father and I are one.”ⁱⁱ When Jesus died and rose again, those words took on a whole new depth and mystery for our monotheist, ‘one God,’ faith ancestors.

The Pentecost wind and the tongues, the speaking and the understanding, the empowering and the inspiring of the promised Advocate, the Holy Spirit, now made for three profoundly different experiences of God for a people, for a church, who loved, who worshipped, who knew, ‘one God.’

Nearly 300 years later the Council of Nicaea, a gathering of bishops and the Emperor Constantine, would resolve this dilemma by naming the Trinity – three distinct persons of God, all equal, all God – yet still just One God. The Trinity was named, but not understood, and that is just as true nearly two millennia later.

And that’s a good thing! Don’t we want God to be a mystery we could never fully grasp and understand? We want and need something, someone, so incredibly magnificent, majestic and beyond us, yet we also want to be able to grasp onto—even in a small way--the One who is so mindful of us, who made us just a little lower than God, and crowned us with glory and honor. It’s intimidating and it’s reassuring, it’s daunting and it’s wonderful.

In *Divine Energy: God Beyond Us, Within Us, Among Us*, Irish Theologian and Missionary priest Donal Dorrⁱⁱⁱ, offers us insight for experiencing the Trinity in a unique way not only for how we seek to touch mystery but also as we have been crowned with the Great Commission, Jesus’ command to go and spread the gospel. “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you.”

Dorr suggests that divine energy is all around us, as close to us as the air we breathe. The God who is beyond us, can be present, can be glimpsed, in nature and in various everyday human experiences such as falling in love, being healed, having a baby, or struggling for personal or political liberation. “God Beyond Us creates entire worlds, studs the sky with stars, gives form and substance to us and to every living creature in all our diverse and intricate glory,^{iv}” and entrusts us with its care.

God Within Us, is the Holy Spirit challenging, comforting and touching the human spirit with inspiration, hope, joy, peace, dreams, intuitions and life energy. God Within Us is the divine spark of the image of God with which we are created and so we each carry inside of us that spark of the Divine, that shapes us faithfully and boldly to shine our light into dark, broken places in the world, to kindle tenderness into hardened hearts, and as a beacon in hopeless times.

God Among Us, is Jesus who showed us how to be authentically human, reflecting Emmanuel with our ability to help bring healing and hope to people and to our world, through action and through prayer. God Incarnate, who is with us to the end of age, beckons us to look for the divine in the faces of those around us, to see God immersed in human living. We cannot see the face of someone that God does not love, who God has no awareness nor understanding of the pain and challenges of life. We cannot see a joy and goodness in another that God has not known.

2000 years ago on a Galilee mountain, Jesus gave the Great Commission to the eleven disciples. “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make

disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

The Great Commission has been passed down in all the generations of Jesus’ followers to go, to make disciples, to baptize and to teach. God Beyond Us created us and has given us the grace, gifts and ability for our own part in this holy work. God Within Us inspires, energizes and guides us to follow Jesus’ command. God Among Us, is in the face, the heart, the life, of everyone we go to.

Praise God from whom all blessings flow; praise him, all creatures here below; praise him above, ye heavenly host; praise Father, Son and Holy Ghost. Amen.

ⁱ Jeremiah 30:22

ⁱⁱ John 10:30

ⁱⁱⁱ Dorr, Donal *Divine Energy: God Beyond Us, Within Us, Among Us*, CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2012

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