



Sermon, June 11, 2017
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Coburg and Junction City United Methodist Churches

“Three-in-One & One-in-Three”

Scripture: John 16:12-15 New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)

¹²“I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. ¹³When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth; for he will not speak on his own, but will speak whatever he hears, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. ¹⁴He will glorify me, because he will take what is mine and declare it to you. ¹⁵All that the Father has is mine. For this reason I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you.

Ann Spivack, in *Reader's Digest*, shares this story: While our friends from India traveled around California on business, they left their 11 year-old daughter with us. Curious about my going to church one Sunday morning, she decided to come along. When we returned home, my husband asked her what she thought of the service.

"I don't understand why the West Coast isn't included too," she replied. When we inquired what she meant, she added, "You know, in the name of the Father, the Son, and the whole East Coast."

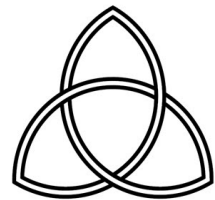
1. At Lake Junaluska, at the library of the World Methodist headquarters, stories about John Wesley's dying words: "The best of all is, God is with us."
 - This is what the Trinity is all about – "God is with us."
2. Trinity tells us about:
 - The nature of reality -
 - God's plan of salvation
 - God's design of human community
3. But first: what we mean by "Three Persons." The Latin word *persona* was originally used to denote the mask worn by an actor. From this it was applied to the role he assumed, and, finally, to any character on the stage of life, to any individual. Thus, the three "persons" of the

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Trinity are actually three *personae*, three self-manifestations of the divine nature in our world.

4. The nature of reality:

- **Trinidimensionality:** I have come to understand that all of reality is Trinitarian, or trinidimensional. Think of a three-braided string. One braid represents the matter-energy dimension of things. The second braid represents the laws and logical structure of that matter-energy. The third string represents the purpose or direction or goal of things. (Give examples) Now let's say that the first string represents the manifestation of the Father, the second string represents the Logos, the Word, the Son., and the third string is the manifestation of the Holy Spirit, the director, mover and connector of all things.
- The basic, essential unit of reality is relationship, the relationship of these three elemental dimensions in life.
- Dynamic not static. Early Church teachers such as Gregory of Nazianus and John of Damascus used the word *perichoresis* to describe the nature of the Trinity. Perichoresis means to move or dance around. This symbol depicts the dynamism of the Trinity:
- Example of quantum physics – atoms are made of small units, and when you talk with physicists, the description of these smaller units is not so much about particles as it is about a whole set of relationships, of the flow of energy and the relationship between the person doing the measuring and that which is being measured.



5. God's plan of salvation:

- Human situation of sin is falling away from primal relationship with God, and thus fallen out of relationship with ourselves and with one another
- God is the Self-Revealer – restorer of relationship
- Threeness: "With-us-ness"
- "Almighty" comes from the Greek *pantokrator* meaning "the one holding all together", "the one supporting", "the one sustaining everything that is" (Rev. 1:8). God is with us in creation.

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- We come to know God through Jesus Christ. In him there is light, illumination and orientation for our lives in the darkness of the world. He is the living Word, the manifestation of the eternal wisdom and life and love of God. God was in Christ, in our midst, and continues, through the power of the Holy Spirit, to be present and active amongst us.
 - Read from Tillich, *A History of Christian Thought*, p. 70. Athanasius: "Salvation is possible only that the Son of God was made man in Jesus so that we might become God." In the Greek Orthodox church this is known as *theosis*. It means gaining eternity. It means our puny human lives with all their struggles, striving, failing and falling, become folded into, embraced and transformed by the great love and presence of God. But possible only if the Logos is eternal, if it is really God who has appeared in Jesus. (p.70).
6. God's design for the human community:
- Trinity is example of unity in diversity – based on love. Love is what holds the Trinity together. This God in whom we believe is the eternal and perfect one whose unity cannot be broken. The relationship of Father, Son and Holy Spirit in the Trinity, a perfect communion (*koinonia*), a unity in diversity, becomes an inspiration for the human community which is called to the same unity in diversity (cf. 2 Cor. 13:14).
 - Oneness: To confess that there is one God of all has significant implications for the human community:
 - Christians give first place in their lives to God alone. Any other power which lays claim to human obedience, whether ideological, religious, political, economic or social, must be seen to be subordinate.
 - Christians profess one God as the source of all life, goodness and beauty. They seek and affirm this unique source in every sphere of life. Christians believe that no account of human life or nature that denies or ignores God is adequate.

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- By affirming that there is one God of all, Christians seek to overcome earthly divisions and conflicts. They trust that the one Creator leads all humankind to reconciliation and peace.
- Since Christians affirm that there is one God, they may respect and share the wisdom of other religious traditions which acknowledge one sacred source of life. Belief in one God unites them with many of their neighbors and provides ground for common action and dialogue.

Conclusion. John Wesley is right. Ultimately what it all comes down to is the assurance that God is with us. Through it all, in it all, in spite of it all and because of it all, God is with us. Truly, that is the best of all.

