

**The Holy Trinity**  
**June 15-16, 2019**  
**Psalm 8:1**

*“How Majestic is Your Name”*

It’s Father’s Day, and as we think about our dads – those who are with us and those who have gone before us – we think of ties, grilling, power tools and other dad-type gifts. Some years ago, I saw a Father’s Day card that spelled out the ABC’s of being a father. Each letter of the alphabet had a typical dad-like response. For example:

A: “Ask your mother. I don’t know.”

B: “Because I said so!”

C: “Close that door! Are you trying to heat/air-condition the whole outdoors?”

There are a few more here:

D: “Do I look like a bank?”

I: “If I have to stop this car, you’re going to be very sorry!”

K: “Keep that thermostat set at 68!”

Sound familiar? I think we can all see and hear our dads in these responses, and maybe even ourselves. These may help describe our earthly fathers, but how do we describe our heavenly Father? And on this Festival of the Holy Trinity, how do we describe the triune God whom we worship: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit? With these questions before us, the opening and closing verses from today’s psalm serve as the basis of the sermon: “**O LORD, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth!**” (Psalm 8:1a). That verse becomes the theme for preaching: “How Majestic is Your Name.” May the Lord’s rich and abundant blessing rest upon the preaching, the hearing, and the living of his Word for Jesus’ sake.

As we approach the summer solstice in the week ahead, enjoying long and lovely evenings that fold into starlit nights, we can understand what the psalmist wrote so long ago: “**When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, what is man that you are mindful of him, and the son of man that you care for him?**” (Psalm 8:3-4). Psalm 8 is a hymn of praise glorifying God the Creator. As amazing and beautiful as the creation is, all of what we see around us points us to the One who has created it all, ourselves included. Face to face with the God of all creation, we become aware of how puny we are in the vastness of what the Lord God has made. “The finite is confronted with the infinite, the transient with the eternal, the perpetual sorrows and anxieties of man, who constantly goes astray, with the peace, steadiness and order manifested by the heavenly bodies which run their prescribed course... As soon as man comes to realize his total insignificance in the sight of God from whom he cannot demand anything, he clearly recognizes that the innermost nature of his relationship with God is that of an *incomprehensible grace*” (*The Psalms: A Commentary*, by Artur Weiser. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1962; p. 143). It is the incomprehensible grace of God that enables us to say with the psalmist: “**O LORD, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth!**” The Name of the God whom we worship is majestic, exalted, holy, and above every name that is named. As Christians, one of our core beliefs is that we worship and serve one God in three Persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. This is the one day out of the year when we use that very long Athanasian Creed that hammers this point home: “Now this is the catholic [universal] faith: We worship one God in unity and the Trinity in unity, neither confusing the persons nor dividing the divine being.” Although the word “trinity” (from the Latin, *trinitas*, “three”) itself is not found in the Scriptures, the teaching is absolutely found in the Scriptures, even as that verse which we read together from the Epistle lesson today makes clear. One God in three Persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Three in One (Acts 2:32-33).

A picture is worth a thousand words, as the old saying goes, and that holds true especially when it comes to the mystery of the Holy Trinity. Abstract concepts often need some kind of concrete visualization for our minds to grab hold of them, including the Triune God. Here are three examples from the world around us: water, an apple, and a plant. Water is found in three forms: as a liquid, as a vapor (steam), and as a solid (ice). All are water. Three in one. An apple has three parts: the peel or skin, the flesh, and the core. All are part of the one apple. Three in one. And the plant – not just any old plant, but the shamrock plant. As legend tells it, it was this plant that was used by St. Patrick to help explain the Trinity to the Irish people when he brought the Christian faith to Ireland. There are three leaves on the one stem. One God in three Persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Three in one.

I'd like to use our altar plaques to describe this Three-in-One God whom we worship and serve. Whenever we come into the Sanctuary, our eyes are drawn to this triune display, but there is a story behind them. The central, suspended cross is original to the Sanctuary when it was built in 1966, but the two plaques were added later. Carved out of mahogany, the artist who created these two panels is a man named John Anderson. In 1971, an 11-year-old girl, Karen Buehrle, a member of this congregation, died suddenly, the only child of her parents. Some of our long-time members may recall this sad event. Through an outpouring of love, her parents gave these plaques as a memorial to her, and they were dedicated on September 17, 1972. Sixteen years ago in 2003, Bill Buehrle, the father of Karen Buehrle, contacted me about coming to see the plaques. He wrote a letter (still in a file that I have): "These plaques are very special to us as it give significance to our daughter's short life here on earth." Bill now lives in his native state of Missouri, but wanted to come and see the plaques as his wife, Louise, had passed away – thirty-two years to the day that their daughter passed away. Karen died on February 15, 1971, and Louise died on February 15, 2003. His wish was to replace the original plate with one that honored both his daughter and his wife. And that is what we did. The dedication plate can be seen in the lower right corner of the lower plaque. Seen together, the two plaques and the cross are a silent but powerful witness to our Triune God: the creating hand of God the Father that has brought all things into existence and that is open in blessing; the cross of God the Son, who laid down his life as payment for our sins and shed his precious blood as the atoning sacrifice for us all; and the descending dove of God the Holy Spirit who calls us and keeps us in this one true faith. In life and in death, we belong to Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. One God in three Persons. Three in one.

Through the creating, redeeming, and sanctifying work of each Person of the Holy Trinity, we are led to worship and praise, to serve and obey Father, Son, and Holy Spirit: one God in three Persons. Three in One. In the awe and mystery of the Triune God, we can only say with the psalmist: **"O LORD, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth!"** Amen.