

Luke 12:1-12 “1 In the meantime, when an innumerable multitude of people had gathered together, so that they trampled one another, Jesus began to say to His disciples first of all, "Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy. 2 For there is nothing covered that will not be revealed, nor hidden that will not be known. 3 Therefore whatever you have spoken in the dark will be heard in the light, and what you have spoken in the ear in inner rooms will be proclaimed on the housetops. 4 "And I say to you, My friends, do not be afraid of those who kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. 5 But I will show you whom you should fear: Fear Him who, after He has killed, has power to cast into hell; yes, I say to you, fear Him!”

"Confessing the One True God"

Jesus tells us in our text that we are to fear God and we are going to consider Who this God is and an example of how knowing His Person & Power has practical implications!

- In both cases we will return to early Church history where the Saints who have gone before us can provide great wisdom through their teachings and actions!

This morning, as part of Trinity Sunday, we read the Athanasian Creed: It is longer and much more detailed, proclaiming what we believe about the two greatest mysteries that God has revealed:

His existence as the great Triune God and the Incarnation of Jesus! Jesus reminded the Disciples and all of us that we must fear God rather than man and it should be obvious that in doing that we must fear the one true God!

Being good Bereans we should start with asking what the Bible teaches about God and about Jesus:

- Does the Bible teach us that there is only one God?

Yes, it certainly does proclaiming in the very first verse, ‘In the Beginning God!’ God makes it very clear through the Prophet Isaiah when He proclaims, ““Look to Me, and be saved, All you ends of the earth! For I am God, and there is no other.”

- Does the Bible teach us that the Father is God?

Yes, when we hear Jesus telling the woman at the well, “But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him.”

- Does the Bible teach us that Jesus is God?

Yes, when John begins his Gospel account with this powerful statement: “In the Beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God.”

- Does the Bible teach us that the Holy Spirit is God?

Yes, it does when Peter declaring to Ananias after he lied to the Holy Spirit, “You have not lied to men but to God.”

Those simple questions and answers reveal why we confess God as a Trinity: The Three Persons Who are the One True God.

- We can do the same when the Bible reveals the Two Natures of Jesus.

We have seen that the Bible declares that Jesus is truly God but John goes on to teach us that he is also truly man because:

“the Word became flesh and dwelt among us”

So, if we are going to rightly fear the one True God, we must have some grasp of these great mysteries of One God in Three Persons and Jesus being fully God and fully man. It can come from those simple question & answers or the depth of the details of the Athanasian Creed!

Now the skeptics will quickly point out that we are being irrational:

- How can One God be Three Persons?
- How can Jesus be fully God & fully Man?

God is Who He has revealed Himself to be and we must accept that even if it is difficult to fully comprehend, which is why we first turned to the Scriptures.

When our modern skeptics want to try and embarrass us with the accusation of being irrational, we can turn the table on them with real life examples...

Ask them if they believe that all matter presents itself as either waves or particles and then ask if they can explain why light exhibits both properties? Or have them explain how photosynthesis works, which is one of the most fundamental elements of our world.

- IF those beautiful green leaves did not turn sunshine and carbon dioxide into food and oxygen we would all die!

I can explain what happens to a young child and scientists can present it with fancy formulas, but no one can fully explain just how it works.

So it should not surprise us when our confession this morning says in part:

“The Father incomprehensible, the Son incomprehensible, and the Holy Spirit incomprehensible...

As also there are not three incomprehensibles, but one Incomprehensible.”

So what does the creed mean when it says that God is incomprehensible?

If the creed is teaching that we can have no comprehension of God, why would there even be a creed.... The wonder of the Bible is that God HAS revealed Himself too us!

What the Creed is reminding us of is the fact that the full nature and character of God is beyond our full or exhaustive comprehension.

If I am told to comprehend this wine glass, that is something I can handle:

I can explain how it was made from sand, can tell you it weighs less than a pound, and how to use it!

If I am told to comprehend Half Dome in Yosemite National Park, I would struggle to explain how it was made, could not tell you how much it weighs and I certainly could NOT grasp it in my hands!

- Does this mean I can comprehend one and not the other? No it means I can better comprehend one
[mention seeing thru glass]

- Again, God is beyond our full comprehension because He is God!

This is why we have Trinity Sunday in the Church calendar and why we recite the great creeds of the church

- The bottom line is that we believe what God has revealed about Himself and not what we think He should be like or even just what we THINK the Scripture teaches about Him [for example there are some who teach that we should only worship the Father as God]

You can spend a lifetime studying what God has revealed and you will still have more to learn...

Not being able to know all there is to know about God does not mean you cannot know Him, worship Him and love Him, just as I can admire half dome, climb half dome and even fear half dome as I think about falling off that 3,000 foot sheer face!

In our morning text, Jesus taught the disciples the lesson that brings us to our practical lesson on this Trinity Sunday:

Jesus says to them “do not be afraid of those who kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will show you whom you should fear: Fear Him who after He has killed, has power to cast into hell; yes, I say fear Him!”

As I mentioned there is an example from history that happened in the time when all these great Creeds were being formulated and it is now very relevant to our struggles today.

While there are many discussions about the proper roles of church and state today, sadly all of the fear seems to have shifted to the state: They have all the “experts” AND the death penalty... If you commit a capital crime they can KILL your body!

- **However most have forgotten that Jesus went on to say they can do NO more!**

Very few today have any fear of the Church because they think, “what can they do?” Try to scare people or maybe excommunicate them?

- **The world said months ago that the Church was not essential and some Christians leaders still seem to agree with them!**

In the early church the Saints were studying the Scriptures and writing the Creeds that we still confess so they could rightly know God and protect the Church from errors.

At the same time they were also working out the practical implications of fearing the True God in ways that still impact us today.

I want to speak about the dispute between the Roman Emperor Theodosius and Bishop Ambrose of Milan back in 390.

It is a story that should be a Hollywood block buster in a righteous world!

Sadly it is largely unknown and yet has incredible implications for what we often face today.

The details of the event:

Theodosius as a Christian Emperor:

Making Christianity the official religion of Rome.

Being concerned about righteousness.

Arrest of a scandalous charioteer.

Riots and the death of a Governor.

Danger of absolute power in the hands of a hot tempered man...

The stand of a godly Bishop at great risk of his life...

A real call to repentance:

Are you ashamed, O Emperor, to do that which the royal prophet David, the forefather of Christ, according to the flesh, did?he said: I have sinned against the Lord.

Bear it, then, without impatience, O Emperor, if it be said to you: You have done that which was spoken of.... say: I have sinned against the Lord. If you repeat those words of the royal prophet: O come let us worship and fall down before Him, and mourn before the Lord our God, Who made us. It shall be said to you also: Since you repent, the Lord puts away your sin, and you shall not die.”

➤ **And this led to real repentance!**

One of the results: No capital execution without waiting 30 days!

It is hard for us to grasp the significance of such a step and yet it resounded down through history with the Magna Carta holding Kings accountable, through the Reformation and to our own nation with a system of checks and balances to keep power given to fallen men in check.

➤ **The People who say America is the problem have lost sight of true history!**

The impact for all of history:

Brian Harris summarized it well in his account of this history:

“Today we are outraged when we hear of atrocities and injustice. And rightly so. But from where does that outrage flow?

Ambrose vs. Theodosius reminds us that when the Roman Empire embraced Christianity it embarked upon a journey that had never previously been trodden. It was a journey where every life mattered, and where no one was above the law. Holding power was no longer seen as an excuse for abusing power. To the contrary, to hold power was to hold a sacred trust from God, and therefore to be eternally accountable.

Brian says, Thank you Ambrose for your extraordinary courage in seeing questions of justice so clearly.

And thank you Theodosius that even though you were Emperor, when you failed so dismally, you had the integrity and courage to seek the forgiveness of God – who knows and understands every human heart.”

Jesus said that what is bound on earth by His disciples is bound in heaven which means a judgment from the church could put your soul in danger of eternal hell fire!

➤ **The state has NO such power!**

This is just one small example of the importance of knowing the Nature and Power of the One True God!

[Mention Ireland and St. Patrick! as we sing the Breastplate.]

Communion Meditation:

Luke 12:6 “Are not five sparrows sold for two copper coins? And not one of them is forgotten before God. 7 But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Do not fear therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows.

8 “Also I say to you, whoever confesses Me before men, him the Son of Man also will confess before the angels of God. 9 But he who denies Me before men will be denied before the angels of God.

10 And anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man, it will be forgiven him; but to him who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit, it will not be forgiven.