

The Holy Trinity • June 11, 2017
St. John's Lutheran Church, Alexandria, VA
Rev. Braun Campbell
Matthew 28:16-20

“In the Name”

“In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.”

That’s how God brings us together. Historically, those are the words that mark the start of the divine service, what’s known as the Invocation. God’s people from all times and places gather to receive the gifts that God gives, calling on His Name. We come together in the Name of the Triune God. This is the God who created us, sustains us, redeems us, brings us together, and sanctifies us. God’s doing all that, even if you’re never thinking about it. But before we even get into any of that, let’s back this conversation up a bit.

You’ve got a name. You might use the name that was printed onto your birth certificate, or you maybe you use a nickname that you acquired somewhere over the years. (It’s less likely, but I suppose you could be living undercover with an assumed name, too.) So, what does your name say about you?

When our children were born, my wife and I gave a lot of thought to what their names should be. We wanted names that they could carry through life with joy, names that would remind them about who they are. We even waited to lock in their names until the day after they were born, just so that we could see if the names we’d picked out would match with those little newborns. We hoped that they would be proud of their names.

Your name says something about you. There are some names that I doubt you’d ever want your child to have. Some names have become infamous – if someone has said something or done something to bring shame to the name they bear, it can have a lasting impact. Know anyone that offended or annoyed you in the past, so much so that the sound of their name puts you off? Other names simply go out of fashion, coming back decades later, connecting people across generations.

Are you worthy of your name?

Each day, you and I can do or say things that might tarnish our names, even slightly. Consider this past week. How has your life reflected on your name in the eyes of your family? Or how about the stranger with whom you interact and then go about the rest of your day? What you say and do and think – even when you’re alone – what if it all reflected back on your name?

What if God gave you His Name? That’s exactly what happens in Holy Baptism. Between last weekend and next weekend, four children are being adopted into God the Father’s family through water and the word. They’re given new life and a new identity as God’s redeemed in Christ. They are brought into the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, following that commission Jesus gave to his disciples, the commission we heard today in Matthew 28. By God’s grace, they become part of our life together – we share in the Name.

On this feast of the Holy Trinity, especially if you have been washed in the waters of God’s grace in Holy Baptism, **consider who you are and whose you are.** God the Father has made you His own child. You are no longer spiritually dead, but alive in God the Son. God the Holy Spirit has made you a part of something greater than yourself and has named you a bearer of the light of Christ.

You can start each day in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. For the baptized, each day is a new beginning. Instead of fearing the future, trust that the God who created and sustains all things will see you through. Jesus has promised to be with you who the Father has placed into his care – even to the end of time. He has sent his Spirit to give you faith, hope, and strength for all the days ahead.

You can end each day in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Wrestling with the sin inside us, neither you nor I have followed Jesus as we should. We’ve fallen short. We have not lived in a way that is worthy of the Name that we share in Christ. But the Triune God doesn’t disown His children. He gives them His honor instead. He gives Himself to us. He forgives.

As God gathers us together this weekend, we profess the faith that we share using the words of the Athanasian Creed. This particular creed goes into some detail about who God is and what it means to look to the God who brings us into the Name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. This is the God who loves us and has revealed Himself to us in His Word. This is the God who gives us faith.

Faith is God's gift, bringing life to the dead. Working in us, faith clings to the promises given by the one true God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Faith keeps pointing us to Jesus of Nazareth, who is both God and Lord for a world of people who are not worthy to bear his name. And yet, he still freely gives it.

As you go out from here today, you bear the Name of God. You are the Church. Be the Church. Jesus' Great Commission for his Church is about following him, living in the Name. We follow Jesus to become more like him. We welcome others into our family of faith so that they might do the same. Look to Jesus as you join him on his mission to bring restored life with God to our world. **Look to Jesus and remember who you are and whose you are.**

In the Name of Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Amen.