

Sermon for May 31st, 2026
TRINITY SUNDAY

READINGS

Isaiah 6:1-7

1 In the year that King Uzziah died I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up; and the train of his robe filled the temple. **2** Above him stood the seraphim. Each had six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. **3** And one called to another and said:

“Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts;
the whole earth is full of his glory!”

4 And the foundations of the thresholds shook at the voice of him who called, and the house was filled with smoke. **5** And I said: “Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts!”

6 Then one of the seraphim flew to me, having in his hand a burning coal that he had taken with tongs from the altar. **7** And he touched my mouth and said: “Behold, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away, and your sin atoned for.”

8 And I heard the voice of the Lord saying, “Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?” Then I said, “Here I am! Send me.”

Psalm 29

1 Ascribe to the LORD, O heavenly beings,
ascribe to the LORD glory and strength.

2 Ascribe to the LORD the glory due his name;
worship the LORD in the splendor of holiness.

3 The voice of the LORD is over the waters;
the God of glory thunders,
the LORD, over many waters.

4 The voice of the LORD is powerful;
the voice of the LORD is full of majesty.

5 The voice of the LORD breaks the cedars;
the LORD breaks the cedars of Lebanon.

6 He makes Lebanon to skip like a calf,
and Sirion like a young wild ox.

7 The voice of the LORD flashes forth flames of fire.

8 The voice of the LORD shakes the wilderness;
the LORD shakes the wilderness of Kadesh.

9 The voice of the LORD makes the deer give birth
and strips the forests bare,
and in his temple all cry, “Glory!”

10 The LORD sits enthroned over the flood;
the LORD sits enthroned as king forever.

11 May the LORD give strength to his people!
May the LORD bless his people with peace!

Romans 11:33-36

33 Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways!

34 “For who has known the mind of the Lord,
or who has been his counselor?”

35 “Or who has given a gift to him
that he might be repaid?”

36 For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen.

John 3:1-17

1 Now there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. 2 This man came to Jesus by night and said to him, “Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher come from God, for no one can do these signs that you do unless God is with him.” 3 Jesus answered him, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.” 4 Nicodemus said to him, “How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?” 5 Jesus answered, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. 6 That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. 7 Do not marvel that I said to you, ‘You must be born again.’ 8 The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.”

9 Nicodemus said to him, “How can these things be?” 10 Jesus answered him, “Are you the teacher of Israel and yet you do not understand these things? 11 Truly, truly, I say to you, we speak of what we know, and bear witness to what we have seen, but you do not receive our testimony. 12 If I have told you earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you heavenly things? 13 No one has ascended into heaven except he who descended from heaven, the Son of Man. 14 And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, 15 that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.

16 “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. 17 For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.”

Our text for meditation this Trinity Sunday is on our Gospel reading.

Grace, mercy and peace to you from God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

The Old Man and the New Birth

Before we are converted, there is simply nothing good about us or in us. In God's eyes the unregenerate man – the non-Christian – is poor, blind, wretched, and evil. His thoughts are wicked from his youth,¹ and he is incapable of believing in the true Gospel. Such men live according to their sin nature, freely going along with the devil's plans for their lives. And I mean it when I say *freely*, for the unregenerate operate according to their nature. The same way that fish swim and birds fly and bees build hives, the nonbeliever does according to his corrupted nature – and chances are he *likes it*. But the same way that fish cannot fly, birds cannot breathe underwater and bees cannot build automobiles, the unregenerate man cannot operate *outside* his corrupted nature. He will not trust in God or believe the Gospel on his own. For this reason, Scripture attests that such men are slaves of sin, even though they have the free will to do as they please.² The only *positive* thing such a person can do is choose not to resist when the Holy Spirit calls them to faith.

This is why Jesus says one must be born again. What does it mean to be born again? It means nothing else than to be spiritually renewed by the work of our Lord in conversion – especially in Baptism. When the water and the Word are applied to the convert, his sins are washed away and he is

1 Genesis 8:21

2 Romans 6:17

granted a newness of life which leads unto salvation. Quite suddenly, God does not see the man as a wicked wretch, but as a new and beloved member of His Kingdom. Allow me to clear something up though: our Lord does not do this *in order* to love the sinner, but *because* He loves the sinner. Salvation is offered to every man, woman and child, with the Holy Spirit continually working to exhort and convince the unregenerate to receive what He offers.³ Even for those places where people are entirely ignorant of the Gospel, He is trying to do this by the Law that is written on their hearts and by the witness of creation itself;⁴ He sends missionaries to those who do not refuse Him. God *wants* to renew everyone my friends. Jesus did not stutter when He said to Nicodemus, “God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.” That means the *whole* world.

The New Birth and Understanding

Even so, not everyone will be saved. One must be born again if he wishes to be a member of God's Kingdom, and have eternal life. This is not to be understood in such a way that you stop being who you are, or else we could not say that God loves sinners – He would be merely replacing them with new persons. For this reason, we retain our names, our bodies, our minds, our maleness or femaleness that we were born with, etc. But this spiritual renewal is *like* being born, in that we must grow into what we now are and accept that we are being raised.

Christ says elsewhere, “unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the Kingdom of Heaven,” and He adds that this requires humility on the part of the Christian.⁵ Think of it this way my friends, what is required for a child to grow? Ah, they must trust and they must learn. A child is entirely dependent on his parents for all of his needs. So too does a newly converted Christian need to trust our Lord for all of his needs, and to learn what our Lord teaches him.

This is especially true regarding *doctrine*, wherein we are taught things that we simply must accept by faith. As it is Trinity Sunday, the Trinity serves as a great example of this. Someone becomes a Christian after hearing the Gospel and accepting the message of Christ being crucified for his sins. Maybe he takes some classes before being Baptized, but generally speaking he will not *understand* the doctrine of the Trinity. He must accept it as an article of faith once it is taught to him, that God is one Being who is three distinct Persons – Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Over time, with catechesis and attending Bible study he will understand where the Scriptures teach this and the finer points of the doctrine (eternal generation, eternal procession, perichoresis, etc.). Still, throughout his earthly life he will still have to trust that our Lord is who He says He is, for the answer of the Trinity is always going to be beyond human reason to a certain extent. So it is with many, many doctrines and moral commands in Scripture, as well as much of the historical narratives as well: simple, childlike *trust* is what is required here, for this man who converted may be a man to the world, but he is a child in the eyes of God, and he must be raised up into spiritual maturity.

We require this of our children all the time. A young boy might see his mother's belly grow over several months, and he will only know that he is expecting a sibling because he believes what his parents tell him. Everything about where babies come from and how his parents are his parents is a mystery to him, but he accepts the simple truths and explanations from his father and mother who love him. Our Lord tells Nicodemus, “The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.” The people who are born of the Spirit act this way because they live in *faith* that where God leads them by His Word, there they must go. Such is the fruit of being born again. No non-believer gets that; because they do not yet belong to Jesus and have not been born again, their eyes are blind until regeneration. They *cannot* understand the things of God.

3 Formula of Concord (Solid Declaration) XI.78

4 Romans 1:19-20, 2:14-15

5 Matthew 18:3-4

The New Birth and the Cross

I preach this sermon under the assumption that everyone reading it or hearing it is a Christian, someone who believes the Gospel and has been Baptized. But for anyone who isn't (or knows someone who isn't), do not lose hope. Our Lord Jesus says to Nicodemus that He must “be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.” This is to say, He went to the Cross and died there *so that* people could be saved. God made sure this happened so that none of our sins, none of our wickedness, could get in the way of Him making us new again, for as Christ says, “God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.” Because God loves us, He sent His Son to pay the penalty for all sins so that no one could be barred from the new birth, from Baptism, from the Holy Spirit dwelling with us and leading us by His Word. Now, He holds out His hands, freely offering this salvation and the eternal life that comes with it.

If you have not yet received this Gospel, take comfort in the knowledge that it is never too late for you to believe. If you do believe but you *know* someone who is not Christian, perhaps it has brought concern to your heart and you worry for their soul; take comfort my friend, for our Lord is working on that one and He hears your prayers for them. He offers them faith and forgiveness, and until they are in the grave it is never too late – keep praying and entrust their soul to our Savior! For it was saving them, just as saving you, that was the entire point of Christ's mission.

Now the Peace of our Lord, which surpasses all understanding, guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.