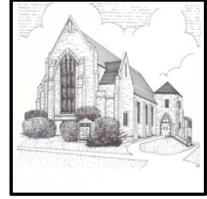




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WORSHIP ON THE LORD'S DAY

Trinity Sunday, June 7, 2020

Prelude

“A Mighty Fortress is Our God”

Tune: *Ein feste Burg*, the Rev. Martin Luther (1483-1546)
 arr. by Camp Kirkland

Immanuel Symphony Orchestra
Jaesung Jeon, Conductor
BuPyeong Methodist Church, April 12, 2015

Apostolic Greeting

Greetings to you and peace, the Name of the Holy Trinity,
 The Almighty God, The Spirit of Life,
 and the Living Word, Jesus Christ:
 Whose love is from everlasting for the whole Creation.

Invitatory¹ Scripture

John 10: 14-16

I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father. And I lay down my life for the sheep. I have other sheep that do not belong to this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd.

Opening Prayer

Almighty and everlasting God, you give us grace, by the confession of a true faith, to worship your eternal Unity; and in the power of your own self-revelation, you give us hearts to love your eternal Trinity: Keep us steadfast in this faith and love, and bring us at last to the hope of glory in Christ Jesus our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Welcome and Community Announcements

∞ Greetings

∞ Trinity Sunday

∞ News & Prayer Concerns

- In person worship resumes on June 14th. Look for a mailing with instructions if you have not received it already.
- Max, Robert, Mike
- Steve Lampman Committal

Repentance, Forgiveness & Peace

Confession is an act of hope in response to our awareness that God is real, that God holds the power of life and death, that we have not love God with our whole being, and that God loves us completely. Confession is born in the human heart when we become broken open by the remembrance that we have bitten the hand of the One who feeds us, ignored the voice of the One who guides us, and spurned the love of the One who desires us. Therefore let us think on these things, and come before the LORD our God:

All join in a time of silent confession.

Most gracious God... **in the sheer Silence,**
your judgment and love bring us to the center of our beings
where you alone may walk with us to heal and to forgive.

We accept you as LORD – Creator, Sustainer, Redeemer –
and enthrone you in our love:
Wash away the stains of lust and greed, we pray;
take away our anger and harshness,
our fear and impatience;
and give us the grace to love our enemies and neighbors
as you have loved us:
the Spirit and the Word working in us that which is pleasing in your sight. Amen.

Brothers and sisters in Jesus Christ, let us rest in the promise of God's love for us, trusting that our fervent prayers will be greeted by our Creator with grace upon grace. Do not fear God's judgment, but rejoice that the Lord Jesus has constrained us with his love: overruling the passions that destroy and filling our emptiness with the urgency of new life in the power of the Spirit. In the Name of the Holy Trinity – the Father/Mother, the Incarnate Word, and the Spirit of Truth – I say to you that your sins are forgiven.

Thanks be to God!

May the peace of Jesus Christ keep our hearts and minds, now and always.

Song of Praise

“He’s Always Been Faithful to Me”

Sara Groves

Morning by morning, I wake up to find
The power and comfort of God’s hand in mine
Season by season I watch Him amazed
In awe of the mystery of His perfect ways
All I have needed His hand will provide
He’s always been faithful to me.

This is my anthem, this is my song
The theme of the stories I’ve heard for so long
God has been faithful, He will be again
His loving compassion, it knows no end
All I have needed, His hand will provide
He’s always... He’s always been faithful...
He’s always been faithful to me.

I can’t remember a trial or a pain
He did not recycle to bring me gain
I can’t remember one single regret
In serving God only, in trusting His hand.
All I have needed His hand will provide
He’s always been faithful to me.

The End of Sound and Self

1 Kings 19: 1-16

Ahab told Jezebel all that Elijah had done, and how he had killed all the prophets with the sword. Then Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah, saying, “So may the gods do to me, and more also, if I do not make your life like the life of one of them by this time tomorrow.” Then he was afraid; he got up and fled for his life, and came to Beer-sheba, which belongs to Judah; he left his servant there.

But he himself went a day’s journey into the wilderness, and came and sat down under a solitary broom tree. He asked that he might die: “It is enough; now, O Lord, take away my life, for I am no better than my ancestors.” Then he lay down under the broom tree and fell asleep.

Suddenly an angel touched him and said to him, “Get up and eat.” He looked, and there at his head was a cake baked on hot stones, and a jar of water. He ate and drank, and lay down again.

The angel of the Lord came a second time, touched him, and said, “Get up and eat, otherwise the journey will be too much for you.” He got up, and ate and drank; then he went in the strength of that food forty days and forty nights to Horeb the mount of God. At that place he came to a cave, and spent the night there.

Then the word of the Lord came to him, saying, “What are you doing here, Elijah?”

He answered, “I have been very zealous for the Lord, the God of hosts; for the Israelites have forsaken your covenant, thrown down your altars, and killed your prophets with the sword. I alone am left, and they are seeking my life, to take it away.”

He said, “Go out and stand on the mountain before the Lord, for the Lord is about to pass by.”

Now there was a great wind, so strong that it was splitting mountains and breaking rocks in pieces before the Lord, but the Lord was not in the wind; and after the wind an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake; and after the earthquake a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire;

and after the fire a sound of sheer silence. When Elijah heard it, he wrapped his face in his mantle and went out and stood at the entrance of the cave.

Then there came a voice to him that said, "What are you doing here, Elijah?"

He answered, "I have been very zealous for the Lord, the God of hosts; for the Israelites have forsaken your covenant, thrown down your altars, and killed your prophets with the sword. I alone am left, and they are seeking my life, to take it away."

Then the Lord said to him, "Go, return on your way to the wilderness of Damascus; when you arrive, you shall anoint Hazael as king over Aram. Also you shall anoint Jehu son of Nimshi as king over Israel; and you shall anoint Elisha son of Shaphat of Abel-meholah as prophet in your place."

The Word of the Lord,
Overcome our failure and despair.

Observe a Time of Silence.

Elijah's Psalm of Lament

"It Is Enough"

Faifield Choral Society, Alex Lawrence, Baritone

It is enough! O Lord, now take away my life,
for I am not better than my fathers!
I desire to live no longer: now let me die,
for my days are but vanity.
I have been very jealous for the Lord, God of Hosts,
for the children of Israel have broken Thy covenant,
and thrown down Thine altars,
and slain all Thy prophets, slain them with the sword.
And I, even I only am left: and they seek my life to take it away!
It is enough! O Lord, now take away my life,
for I am not better than my fathers!
Now let me die, Lord, take away my life!

Text: selected verses from the Scriptures, I Kings 19
Music: Felix Mendelssohn

The Almighty God Sends the Spirit and the Word

In the beginning was the Word,
and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.
He was in the beginning with God.

John 1: 1-2

And the earth was a formless void
and darkness covered the face of the deep,
while the Breath of God swept over the face of the waters.
Then God said, "Let there be light,"
and there was light.

Genesis 1: 2-3

All things came into being through the Word,
and without Him not one thing came into being.
What has come into being in Him was life,
and the life was the light of all people.
The light shines in the darkness,
and the darkness did not overcome it.

John 1: 3-5

In the sixth month, the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. And he came to her and said, "Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you." But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be.

The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end."

Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I know not a man?"

The angel said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God.

Luke 1: 26-35

And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us,
and we have seen his glory, the glory of the Father's only Son,
full of grace and truth.
From his fullness we have all received grace upon grace.

The law indeed was given through Moses;
grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.
No one has ever seen God.
It is God the only Son, who is close to the Father's heart,
who has made him known.

John 1: 14, 16-18

...went into the Ken’s Fruit Market the other day, and boy were the Blackberries on sale: 5 pints for \$4! I bought 10 pints, and they did not go bad. Elliott ate them by the handful, and I had to rescue 5 pints to make a cobbler... rescue, I say... That kid was stealing those berries out of the colander while I was mixin’ the dry goods!

Now on the subject of blackberry cobbler, I’m gonna guess that most of you know just exactly what I’m talking about, and how delicious it is when you get to the bottom of the bowl and that little bit of melted ice cream has mixed with that sweet berry juice to create the nectar of the banquet feast of the Lamb! But what if, by way of example, there was an exchange student from, say... Sri Lanka hanging ‘round our fellowship who’d never seen a blackberry, let alone tasted the glorious magnificence of a cobbler? That poor child would hear all of us talking about something we had in common and either have to take our word for it, or right the whole thing off as a lot of nonsense. Blackberries, forsooth, ain’t nothing but a weed after all!

Well... This is just what life is like for most of us ordinary folks when the high-falutin theological types go on and on trying to explain the Nature of the Holy Trinity. Even if we’re interested we’re not going to join in the conversation. And the idea of the Trinity remains just one of those things made up by the Church – which, let’s be honest, has always had a lot of weeds growin’ up in its flower beds.

So if the only way to *know* God as Trinity is to *experience* this, what am I supposed to say to you right now? Anybody ought to be glad they’re sitting on the listening end of this instead of where I am. With great humility, however, I will attempt to guide your imaginations – your spiritual palates, if you will – to the absolutely delectable theology of the Holy Trinity.

To begin, let’s talk about the problem:

The typical text for Trinity Sunday comes from the end of Matthew’s gospel,ⁱⁱⁱ in which Jesus instructs his apostles to baptize new disciples “in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit” (Mt. 28: 19).

“There you have it!” shouts the biblical theologian. “Jesus himself talking about the Trinity!” Well... now just hold on a minute Professor So-and-So. There’s a whole lot of difference between a cobbler and a list of ingredients.

This text seems too simple... too obvious. This text leaves the listener or reader right where we started with the mundane, intellectual choice to either believe that the Divine Being is *Trinity*... or not. Either way, I’m not sure believing or not believing in the Trinity merely as a piece of Christian doctrine makes much difference to our daily lives. There... there’s problem:

Doctrine won’t change our lives....

I think we all struggle with this: we feel like we ought to believe, cause the Church says so... and this “Father-Son-Holy Spirit” language seems to show up in a whole lot of our creeds and worship. But the reality remains...

that the Nature of God
cannot be reduced to a liturgical formula
put into the mouth of Jesus
in a biography composed by a late first century Jew
who we think was named Matthew.

This is so far removed from our daily lives as to be laughable! The **full** Nature of the Divine Being remains beyond our understanding and cannot be extrapolated from single lines of scripture. We cannot make what is Infinite into something finite for our own pleasure. Indeed, we must avoid making idols out of our doctrines; for what we say about God, what our minds can hold, is very much less than the God who is at work both in and outside of time and space.

How then are we to preach the Trinity?

Well... If we notice – and admit – that Matthew’s trinitarian formula for Baptism is absent from the gospels of Mark, Luke, and John, this discrepancy pushes us to plumb the depths of the whole Bible to discern the Nature of God in the actions God takes. In other words, if we’re going to discern the Nature of the Divine from what the Whole Scripture implies, we’re going to have to enter the narrative ourselves. That’s what it means to plumb the depths. We have to enter the story. Why is this a risk... a big deal? Precisely because this basic difference between formula and encounter marks the difference between cultural Christians and the disciples of Jesus: the cultural Christian believes certain things *about* Jesus, and therefore God; the disciple learns to love like him by walking with him, and inasmuch is *caught up in* his life and work. Only the disciple will ever truly *know* God as...

Trinity.

Let us pray:

[Silence]

Holy One:
The Universe tells,
By light and the shapes of light,
That there is - *the beginning...*

Now, far flung
Through untold Miles and Minutes,
We know you, Creator of all things,
As you answer the cry of our hearts
In the Witness of the Spirit,
In the Work of the Son.

May your Light,
Shaped into words,
Twinkle through the shadows of our minds,
To show us that you are real,
That you are LOVE,
That you are - *the ending...*

Amen.

The passages from Genesis, John, and Luke that we have spliced together today, reveal God as Trinity in both the beginning of all things and the fulfillment of all things. But the word "Trinity" itself is nowhere to be found in Scripture. Rather, it is the way the narrative unfolds which implies a plurality of persons in the Divine Nature. It is in God's own action and work the LORD is revealed as

Imagination, Initiation, and Articulation,
or... Creator, Animator, Formulator,
or... Sovereign, Herald, Envoy,
or... Parent, Love, Child,
and yes... Father, Spirit, Son.

These analogies could go on and on, if you pay close attention to the way God's actions reveal God's character! And the climactic apex of God's self-revelation is when the histories of Israel give birth to the Body of Christ through the incarnation, life, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus.

Sorry. Was that complicated.... I suppose so. Let's say it again:

God is revealed in the things God does.

And God's principle action is the Incarnation of the Living Word in the human person Jesus. In other words, it is through Jesus that we come to expect encounters with the Spirit and the Almighty God. To say anything less than this reduces God to an idea we can manage - and by "manage" I don't mean "understand," but: "manipulate" and "control." This will never do, because it falls short

of inviting us to become part of the story ourselves. We do not invite God into our story....on Tuesday afternoons when its convenient, or when we're smackin' our lips invoking the blessing of God on berries and cream! *We do not invite God into our story!!* Rather, God invites us to awaken to the history of HIS initiatives of Creation and Redemption. As Jesus says to the disciples of John the Baptist, "Come and see!"

Is God to be known as *Trinity*?
"Come and see!" says the Incarnate Word.

We have to participate in the unfolding story of the Creator's love
in order to find out.

So... let's have a go!

What strikes me in the overarching narrative of Scripture is that the witness - or action - of the Spirit always seems to precede the work of the Son.

The Breath of God moves in the shadows of the deep before the Word of God pronounces light.

The Spirit of God moves in the darkness of Mary's womb before the Light of the World is conceived there.

The Spirit of God moves Jesus to the darkness of private temptation before supporting him in his public ministry.

The Spirit of God moves in the shadows of the grave before Jesus is raised from the dead.

And, finally, as we have just experienced in the Feast of Pentecost... For each of us: the Spirit moves in the shadows of our lives before the victory of Christ is conceived in our hearts and minds.

This is the only way to know God as Trinity:
the action of the Spirit brings about the work of the Son in us,
such that we ourselves
become God's incarnate love for the world.

Too often, as in Matthew's baptismal formula, we set the Son ahead of the Holy Spirit. But this neglects the initiative of God in human experience, by which the Spirit prepares for the birth of Christ in all times and in all places. As Paul says to the Church at Rome, "When we cry, 'Abba! Father!' it is that very Spirit bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ—if, in fact, we suffer with him so that we may also be glorified with him" (Rom. 8: 15-17). In other words, the outpouring of praise - which characterizes the life of discipleship - is preceded by the inward witness of God in the Person of the Holy Spirit. What moves the heart is the Spirit. What moves the body and mind in ministry is Christ born in us. There's no life with God that is not a response to this prompting of the Spirit.

We can go to church for a hundred years, dear friends, and never live life in the Spirit. But the moment we begin to let our spiritual emotions show in a life-giving way, the life of Christ is revealed in ours. I'm reminded of sister Marge Bowne at First UMC, who sometimes simply cannot contain herself, bursting out with physical and verbal exclamations that makes it clear that the Spirit is bearing witness with her spirit that she is a child of God! But why do we chuckle at Marge? Why do

we say, “Oh, bless her heart.” Why don’t we *all* allow ourselves to express the outpouring of the Spirit in ecstatic exostulations? Probably because we’re more concerned with the appearance of worship, rather than the act of praise. Probably because our worship is more about us than it is about God. But the Trinity doesn’t call us to be bumps on a log, dutifully slogging along in the moralisms of our culture! The Trinity calls us to new, and full, and everlasting, and very exciting life!

This confronts the problem: that God as Trinity remains just an idea for most of us. Without the vibrant life of Christ born in us, our faith falters when the going gets rough and the brokenness and sin of the world crush us with despair. But here’s the Good News: that humans are crushed by despair and sin-sickness is something we find in God’s story too. In fact, the condition of being crushed by despair is exactly where we find Elijah today. His victory over the prophets of Baal now entirely forgotten, and convinced that Jezebel will do everything she can to murder him, Elijah flees into the desert wilderness of Horeb. Let’s see how the story unfolds:

- Undone by human fear of Jezebel, Elijah forsakes his prophetic vocation.
- Utterly ashamed of this fear, he goes away to die, finding that his paltry faith is “no better than his fathers.”
- Lying half dead under a scrub-tree, the Spirit quiets his fear to the point of sleep, and the messengers of God make provision for his physical need.
- The combination of spiritual and physical nourishment allows him to travel to the heart of that wilderness, where the presence of the LORD lies thick and heavy upon the holy mountain.
- Sensing that some great sign draws near, Elijah waits in the cave.
- But the signs of wind, earthquake, and fire are merely heralds of the Massive and Eternal, Unbegotten Silence of Almighty God, which no human mind may rationalize, which no human eye may behold.
- In that Silence, Elijah experiences the certainty of the inward witness of the Spirit and arrives at that place where the human being ends and the Divine Being begins.
- Once again, he and his God are one, and he covers his face in his cloak with a mixture of terror and delight.
- And then, the Spirit having made fertile the dark chaos of his despair, the Living Word is conceived in Elijah’s life once more, with grace upon grace, by the renewal of his vocation and identity.

Can you not find yourself in this story? The holy mountain is – in fact – at the heart of our lives as well. Deep within the wilderness of our unexplained existence, at the center of our questions about the beginning and the end, there is a cave in which each of us hides to shelter from the things that are killing us – our shame, our regrets, our broken vows, our addictions, our sinful vanity, our hunger, our exhaustion, and our wounds.

Beloved sisters and brothers, Elijah’s story is for all of us. But hear this: we don’t have to have some catastrophic event crush our lives in order to go to the center of ourselves and experience the reality that God is with us. Any time we admit our emptiness, the fullness of God may be received: grace, upon grace, upon grace. Are you broken like falling rock by the violent winds of your emotions? Do the things that once felt certain in your life feel more like the shifting ground of an earthquake? Do the flames of pride, disappointment, and anger consume you?

*Hold on to your faith my friends,
and wait a little longer in prayer!*

Don't step out of the cave of your innermost self until the Silence is complete and the inward witness of the Spirit says, "Now! Wrap your face in the garment of your love! The LORD is passing by!"

In conclusion, dear brothers and sisters, remember this, if nothing else:
the Holy Trinity is not a doctrine of the Church;
the Body of Christ is the Story of the Trinity.

And you have to enter this story in order to taste the sweetness of God; you have to join those persons who are moved by the Witness of the Spirit deep within to prepare the world for the coming of the Victorious Christ in clouds of great glory with the holy angels,

that the LORD, the Almighty -
whose Nature and Name is LOVE -
might *finally* be all in all.

**Praise God, from whom all life is born;
Praise God, who first pronounced the dawn;
Praise God, the Unbegotten One:
Creator, Spirit, and the Son!**

Amen.

The Offering

“Love Divine, All Loves Excelling”

The Concordia Choir

1 Love divine, all loves excelling,
Joy of heav'n to earth come down:
fix in us thy humble dwelling,
all thy faithful mercies crown:
Jesus, thou art all compassion,
pure, unbounded love thou art;
visit us with thy salvation,
enter ev'ry trembling heart.

2 Breathe, O breathe thy loving Spirit
into ev'ry troubled breast;
let us all in thee inherit,
let us find the promised rest:
take away the love of sinning;
Alpha and Omega be;
End of faith, as its Beginning,
set our hearts at liberty.

3 Come, Almighty to deliver,
let us all thy life receive;
suddenly return, and never,
nevermore thy temples leave.
Thee we would be always blessing,
serve thee as thy hosts above,
pray and praise thee without ceasing,
glory in thy perfect love.

4 Finish, then, thy new creation;
pure and spotless let us be:
let us see thy great salvation
perfectly restored in thee;
changed from glory into glory,
'til in heav'n we take our place,
'til we cast our crowns before thee,
lost in wonder, love, and praise.

Hymn: the Rev. Charles Wesley (1707-1788)
Tune: *Hyfrydol* by Rowland Hugh Prichard (1811-1887)

The Affirmation of Faith, Council of Constantinople, A. D. 381.

We believe in one God,
the Father Almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all that is, seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,
the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father,
God from God, Light from Light,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made,
of one Being with the Father.

Through him all things were made.

For us and for our salvation
he came down from heaven
by the power of the Holy Spirit
and became incarnate from the Virgin Mary,
and was made human.

For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;
he suffered death and was buried.

On the third day he rose again
in accordance with the Scriptures;
he ascended into heaven
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.

He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead,
and his kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the Giver of Life:
who proceeds from the Father;
who, with the Father and the Son, is worshiped and glorified;
who has spoken through the Prophets.

We believe in one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church.
We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.
We look for the resurrection of the dead,
and the life of the world to come. Amen.

Prayers of Thanksgiving & Intercession

[Extemporaneous Prayer]

*Most gracious God, you feed us with the delights of your story...
you come to us over and over again in the power of your Spirit
to make the narrative of your love and your salvation new for us again!
And so today we praise you, we glorify you,
we give you thanks for the Scriptures... those who penned them...
those who have brought them down to us through the generations;
for by your grace, they open to us the pathways of your life,
the inner workings of your Nature,
and the invitation to become part of your life and your grace.*

*Guide us, O God, as we seek to be your Church in a very difficult time.
We pray for the Body of Christ in all places:
our Bishop, David, and all ministers who seek to lead,
and all people everywhere who claim the faith of Jesus Christ
and seek to walk in his love that your glory might be known among all people.
We pray for the Church, O God.
And we pray especially for these two congregations:
First United Methodist Church, Ionia,
and Lyons-Muir Church:
may your Spirit breathe life into these congregations
with new vigor, new vibrancy, new expectancy,
new expostulations of ecstatic adoration!
We give you thanks for the way you've guided us until now,
and we pray that you would lead us forward.*

*And, Lord, we pray for the agony of this world
torn as it is by war, by homelessness, by famine, by disease,
by prejudice, by racism, by classism, by sexism...
All our prejudices come together, O God, to make a world for the human family
that is unlivable, unsustainable, and broken.
And so we pray for peace, we pray for forgiveness, we pray for reconciliation...
we pray that all the peoples might realize that we cannot live without each other,
that we cannot live without you.*

*Finally, O God, we pray for our own selves,
our families, our friends, those whom we know to be in great need...
We pray especially for those among us who do not have the status of citizen,
who do not have the status of landed immigrant:
who have no rights, no voice, no recourse,
who are alone in their suffering.*

O Lord, give our hearts compassion, give us grace.
And, God, we pray for those who are suffering from violence –
not just racial violence –
but violence in the home, violence in marriages, violence in schools,
violence in churches:
Lord, give us peace; change our hearts and minds.

Lord, we pray for our country and for all who lead,
that they might be stirred with an actual spirit of compassion;
that they might be stirred with a longing and a love for you,
and not just the way your words and your power can be twisted to our own ends.

May you be glorified, O God, and you alone!

Give your Church power and conviction
to proclaim your Name among this people.

And, God, we pray especially for those who are dying:
we think of Mike, we think of Robert...
And we pray for all those everywhere whose lives have come to their close:
guide them, O Heavenly Father, into the Way of your Eternal Life;
bless them with peace; comfort them with your grace;
strengthen their families;
and all for the sake of him who died to show us your true Nature,
Jesus Christ our Lord.

Finally, O Lord, we open the secret places of our hearts to you,
knowing that you will meet us there:

[After a time of silent prayer, all continue with one voice:]

Our Father.... who art in heaven, hallowed be thy Name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our sins, as we forgive
those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: for thine
is the kingdom, the power, and the glory forever. Amen.

Song of Blessing

“The LORD bless you and keep you”

Batavia Madrigal Singers

The LORD bless you and keep
The LORD make HIS face to shine upon you
and be gracious unto you.
The LORD lift up the light of HIS countenance upon you
and give you peace.
Amen.

Text: Numbers 6: 24-26
Musical Setting: John Rutter (b. 1945)

Closing Prayer

Almighty God, thou hast given us grace at this time with one accord to make our common supplications unto thee; and hast promised, through thy well-beloved Son, that when two or three are gathered in thy Name, thou wilt be in the midst of them: Fulfill now, O Lord, the desires and petitions of thy servants as may be best for us, granting us in this world knowledge of thy truth, and in the world to come life everlasting. Amen

Commissioning & Benediction

Go now in peace, dear friends;
may Christ be born in you this day.
And may the blessing of the Holy Trinity -
the God that loves you -
be known to you in your daily lives.
Amen.

ⁱ Invitatory: adjective, describing an action or gesture or speech which contains or conveys an invitation.

ⁱⁱ The use of gendered pronouns for the Divine Being is a case in point. The binaries of masculin and feminin do not lead us to the knowledge of God. If anything they obscure it by making God in our image. So when I make reference to the Divine Being, and the restrictions of English syntax and grammar impose a choice of gendered pronouns, and when I take into consideration that my audience will only think it grand standing to say “God HERSELF”, I put the letter of that pronoun in ALL CAPS, which makes reference to the way the Divine Name is spelled in holy scripture as LORD. In other words, English falls short of our descriptive needs, and the Being of God must remain a mystery. The exception to this pronoun connundrum is Jesus. He was a man, in the flesh.

ⁱⁱⁱ When “gospel” is written with a lower case “g,” I am indicating the human composition of the theological biography of Jesus. When I refer to the “Gospel” with a capital “G,” I’m indicating the Total Narrative of Jesus, which includes the entire Scripture. This is very much like the difference between actual history as it happens, and how history is interpretively written down for posterity. John admits this nuance and interpretive license at the end of his gospel: “Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book, but these are written so that you may come to believe...”