**Isaiah 6:1-8 May 30, 2021 (Holy Trinity Sunday)**

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

Our text for this morning comes from our Old Testament lesson the book of Isaiah the 6th chapter here re-reading these words. “And one called to another and said: ‘Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory!” And the foundations of the thresholds shook at the voice of him who called and the house was filled with smoke. And I said “Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips.” This is our text.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

The Athanasian Creed which we will speak this morning is a denser and more in depth creed than what we usually read on Sunday mornings to confess our faith. Because it’s only said on this one special Sunday of the Church Year you could say that it is a “special” creed. But that wouldn’t really do it justice. Because this creed is talking about a doctrine in our Christian faith, that isn’t just “special” or “secondary” it’s foundational to our confession to this world that we are Christians. That we are Lutherans. That we follow and take seriously the solas of the Reformation in Faith alone, Christ alone, Grace alone and finally Scripture alone. Because Scripture teaches us about who our God is. For our God is, as this creed will teach us, One God in Trinity and Trinity in Unity neither confusing the persons nor dividing the substance. Or, as a call back to last week’s sermon, how we would explain it to a kindergartner, or a five year old. Our God is Three in one. The Holy Trinity.

This doctrine and teaching isn’t just something that we confess on Holy Trinity Sunday, but it’s included in the Apostles and Nicene Creeds that we confess the rest of the year. The point being that the Trinity is important to our understanding of God and his divine essence understood through three distinct persons so that we can understand what that God has done, is doing, and will do for us. The Trinity teaches us about ourselves when we understand the work that is done by God through all three persons of the Trinity. It is an important doctrine that sets us apart from other religions who confess to believe in a “God” that is sometimes completely undefined. The truth is we live in a world where that word “God” can mean just about anything to different religious groups and organizations. But this central teaching of our faith defines what we believe in. We believe in the Triune God, the God described in Holy Scripture, the God that is illustrated in Christ’s Baptism where we see Father; in the voice from the cloud, Son; human flesh and blood being baptized by John and rising from the waters and Holy Spirit descending as a dove from heaven. This doctrine separates us from the teaching of other religious groups that believe in a God yet deny the Trinity like the Islamic faith.

God teaches us through His Word, who He is and what He has done. As we see in our Epistle lesson in Peter’s words and teaching in the sermon from the Day of Pentecost where he talks and teaches about Jesus Christ through the main doctrines of the Bible which are Law and Gospel. There we see the Father delivering up His Son, Jesus Christ, to death, a teaching that is reiterated and reinforced in the Gospel lesson as Jesus speaks to Nicodemus and gives us the Gospel in a nutshell in John 3:16. But it’s in the Old Testament lesson where we understand what it really means to see and experience the Triune God and what it means for us followers and children of God to be in fellowship or contact with him.

For Isaiah sees God, and not in a burning bush or in a soft whispering wind. He sees the authoritative, omnipotent God, the Father seated on a throne, surrounded by seraphim; angels flying with many wings and even using wings to cover their faces from the holiness of God himself. This is our picture of the Triune God, for the seraphim don’t just sing Holy one time or Holies, to give the impression that there is multiple gods, but they distinctly say “Holy, Holy, Holy” to teach us that the holy Trinity is just that, three distinct and separate holy persons joined into one divine essence. And it is the supreme embodiment of holiness and perfection that Isaiah witnesses before his eyes.

The sight of which leads him to one conclusion. “Woe is me” he says, “For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips.” This isn’t just an “uh oh” moment for Isaiah, but what he’s trying to help us understand is that seeing God doesn’t equal power, or majesty, or a dose of the Spirit seeing God equals…death. Exodus 33:20, we hear the words of God saying “no one can see me and live.” Isaiah is staring death in the face. Not because God himself is evil or angry or a God of death but because Isaiah is an unclean impure creature in the presence of Holiness and Good itself.

And he is not good. He is impure. He is sinful. He is evil. He has sinned in thought, word and deed. He isn’t worthy and in the same presence of God he can’t stand or even survive. That’s what we see from Isaiah, that Good and Evil don’t mix, not when they are completely put together with each other. Which is echoed in the words of Holy Scripture. That those who are lukewarm in faith are spat out of God’s mouth. That we, who have been redeemed can’t possibly return to our lives of lawlessness and sin. In short what the Bible teaches is that there is no place for unrepentant sin in the heart of those who are Christians, Lutherans, believers and children of God.

We can’t hold on to sin, we can’t hide sin, we can’t excuse sin or make amends for it on our own. Even children are taught and understand that God is good, well this is the source of that. God in his goodness can’t have fellowship with anything that has evil within it. And we can’t make ourselves clean from the evil of sin in our hearts and in our words, thoughts and actions. That’s the lie of Satan, that we can purify ourselves from this sin. But there is only one thing that we can do, and we see it here in Isaiah. We must confess our sins to God. “Woe is me for I am lost for I am a man of unclean lips” That’s us. That you, that’s me. No matter what good we believe we’ve done, no matter how hard we’ve worked to hide our shame we are unclean in the presence of God. We can’t stand in the sight of his holiness and live.

Which is why the angel doesn’t leave Isaiah to die but instead takes the coal from the altar and presses it to his lips, to make him clean, and as the angel says “Behold this has touched your lips, your guilt is taken away and your sin atoned for.” What an amazing gift. A gift that Isaiah does nothing to earn on his own, but a gift that is given freely for his benefit. He who was unclean receives from his mouth the gift of salvation through the forgiveness of sins. Just like we do, on Sundays when we are blessed to come forward, open our mouths and receive the very body and blood of the second person of the Trinity for the same forgiveness of sins. For Isaiah the key to his fellowship with God was the forgiveness of sins he received from the angel and the coal, and since he was cleansed of that sin he could be in fellowship with holiness because He was made holy. For us the key to our fellowship with God is the forgiveness of sins we receive from the body and blood of Jesus Christ in bread and wine that cleanses us from our sin and allows us to be in fellowship with the holiness of the Triune God through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ who instituted the Sacrament of the Altar for us. All three persons of the Trinity are involved in the forgiveness of our sins. The Father who sent His Son, as we read in our gospel lesson, not to condemn this world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. The Father who gave his one and only Son who was lifted up like the serpent in the wilderness and who died taking on himself the punishment for our unworthiness and winning for us eternal life. And finally the Holy Spirit, who creates a faith that believes in Jesus Christ so that we will be saved. A faith that comes through the work of the Holy Spirit through the rebirth of the water and the Spirit that Jesus teaches to Nicodemus about pointing to the waters of Holy Baptism.

That’s what the Holy Trinity does for you. The Father created you, the Son died for you, the Holy Spirit continues to sustain your faith through the Word of God and His Sacraments instituted for you. That’s why we spend the time to read through the entire Athanasian Creed. It’s why we confess the Triune God and remember who our God is as Scripture has taught us each and every Sunday here in His house. It’s what we have, as we go out in our lives as God’s children and serve in the vocations He has called us, echoing the same words that Isaiah said when God asked “Whom shall I send and who will go for us?” We say what Isaiah said. “Here am I! Send me.” So may God send you, and work through you, all the days of your life in thanksgiving for his gift and in remembering His love.

Amen.

The peace of God which surpasses all human understanding keep our hearts and minds through faith in Christ Jesus.

Amen.