

Emmanuel Ev. Lutheran Church—Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod

Holy Trinity

June 12, 2022

Sermon by Pastor Daniel Pautz

Sign, sealed and delivered

—John 16:12-15

I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear. But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. He will bring glory to me by taking from what is mine and making it known to you. All that belongs to the Father is mine. That is why I said the Spirit will take from what is mine and make it known to you.

Do you like the hymn we have just sung, “Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty?” It is among the favorite of many Christians. It is sung throughout the year and especially on this day which is Trinity Sunday. The last line of both the first and last verses has the words, “*God in three persons, Blessed Trinity.*” There are three persons, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Each person is God and yet instead of three Gods, there is only one. The teaching of the Trinity is beyond our human understanding. In our text this morning all three persons of the Trinity are mentioned. First of all, it is Jesus, the Son of God who spoke these words. He spoke about God the Father and also God the Holy Spirit. In our message this Sunday morning as we speak about the Triune God, I will be using the text as a stepping stone to additional passages about the Trinity.

A young man said to his pastor, “I just don’t get this teaching concerning the Trinity. That there are three persons, each of them is God, and yet only one God – why that seems almost preposterous.” The pastor inquired, “Do you believe that the Bible teaches the doctrine of the Trinity?” to which the man answered, “Yes, I do but I can’t get it into my head.” The pastor then asked, “What size cap do you wear?” He answered, “Size 7 & ¼. But what does the size of my head have to do with our discussion about the Trinity?” The reply was “How do you expect to get the Almighty God and everything about Him into a size 7 & ¼ size head.” You get the point, don’t you? You don’t have to understand everything about God to believe in God.

Another astonishing thing about the Triune God has to do with your salvation. Can you think of anything more important than your forgiveness and you’re going home to heaven? Sometimes you and I can be rather indifferent about the whole matter, treating it as if it were of secondary importance. And that is shameful. But it was not of secondary importance to the Triune God. Look at what God did about it. All three Persons of the Triune God were involved. There was perfect harmony; no disagreement about saving us sinners. Your salvation is a matter of signed, sealed, and delivered. The expression ‘signed, sealed, and delivered’ is an idiom that goes back in history about the legal deed of a sale of a house. Back then in order for the sale to be valid it had to be signed by the seller, sealed with a wax seal, and delivered to the new owner. Your salvation was signed by the Father, sealed by the Son, and is delivered by the Holy Spirit.

The plan of your salvation was already made from eternity. It did not have its beginning on the day that Adam and Eve fell into sin. It wasn’t on that day that the three Persons of the Trinity had a quick meeting to decide what to do. It certainly was not where they would make the decision to tell Adam and Eve and all their descendants, “Look, you sinned. You got yourself into this mess. Why should we care? Give a reason why you should be bailed out.”

What is mind-boggling is that the Triune God already had the plan for your salvation. Before the creation of the universe it had been decided. It had been determined that the Father would send His Son Jesus to redeem us. We could say your salvation was signed by the Father. Here are some Bible passages. Titus 1:2 speaks about “the hope of eternal life which God, who cannot lie, promised before time began.” The Book of Ephesians in speaking about salvation says that this was “according to his eternal purpose which he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord.” From 1 Peter 1:20 are the words “Jesus was chosen before the creation of the world, but was revealed in these last times for your sake.”

It had been decided from eternity that God the Father would give His Son. The Lord Jesus referred to His Father in our sermon text from John chapter 16 which was spoken on Maundy Thursday evening. It was but a few hours before His sufferings and death. In the book of John Jesus referred to His Father nearly 100 times. God the Father was very much involved in your salvation. You know John 3:16 which speaks about God. God (God the Father) so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son. The plan of salvation was signed by God the Father in eternity.

The Second Verse of a great hymn by Paul Gerhardt titled “A Lamb Goes Uncomplaining Forth” says,

*This Lamb is Christ, the souls' great Friend,
the Lamb of God, our Savior.
Him God the Father chose to send To gain for us His favor.
"Go forth, My Son," the Father said,
"And free my children from their dread Of guilt and condemnation. The wrath and stripes are hard to bear,
But by your passion they will share, The fruit of your salvation."*

Your salvation was signed by God the Father and sealed by the Second Person in the Trinity, God the Son. It was sealed as He led that perfect life in your place. It was sealed as He took the punishment for your sins. The one on the cross was Jesus, true God and true man. Listen to the third verse of the hymn, "A Lamb Goes Uncomplaining Forth." Jesus is speaking.

*"Yes, Father, yes, most willingly I'll bear what you command me.
My will conforms to your decree; I'll do what you have asked me"
O wondrous love, what have you done!
The Father offers up His Son,
Desiring our salvation. O Love, how strong you are to save!
You make His bed within the grave Who built the earth's foundation.*

Our Lord Jesus who spoke the words of our text while in the Upper Room in Jerusalem where He instituted the Lord's Supper was about to leave to go to Gethsemane as He was about to seal our salvation. From Gethsemane on to the Jewish Court of Caiaphas, then to the Roman court of Pontius Pilate. From there he would go to Calvary's cross and unto His death. On the third day he rose from the dead victoriously. Our salvation was sealed! Peter wrote, "For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect. He was chosen before the creation of the world, but was revealed in these last times for your sake" (1 Peter 1:18-20).

Yes, signed and sealed. Now for a moment just suppose that a wealthy billionaire decided to give you several million dollars. The documents were signed; they were all notified and sealed. But the million dollars was never delivered to you. It never appeared in your bank accounts. It was nowhere to be found. In a similar way the matter of your salvation was signed by the Father and sealed by the Son. But unless you actually receive it, it is of no benefit to you. But, hold on, there is a delivery system, a wondrous and unique one. Salvation is delivered by the Third Person in the Triune God, the Holy Spirit. Jesus spoke of the Holy Spirit in our text and over 20 times in the Book of John.

Let's look at some important things the Holy Spirit does for your salvation. He has a system of delivering salvation to us. It is through the message of the Bible. Now remember that the Bible has been inspired by the Holy Spirit. The Scriptures speak the full message of salvation. It tells us what God the Father has done for you and what God the Son has done for you. All this good news is delivered by the Holy Spirit. But now imagine that this gift of many millions of dollars we spoke about before is actually being delivered to you. It is not a scam but the real thing. However, you refuse to accept it. Delivered but not received!

The gift of salvation that is delivered is received through faith. But there is a problem. We cannot bring ourselves to faith in the Lord Jesus. On our own we would never, never be a true follower of Jesus. Paul wrote that "No one can say that Jesus is his Lord." Do you know how that passage continues, "No one can say, 'Jesus is Lord,' except by the Holy Spirit" (1 Corinthians 12:3). It is the Holy Spirit who brings us to faith.

For many of us that happened already when we were babies and were baptized in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. We were born of water and the Spirit for the Holy Spirit brought us to faith. For others the gift of salvation that was delivered to them and received was as the Holy Spirit brought them to faith through the message of the Bible. You know the passage, "So then, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message comes through the word of Christ." All this about faith is not a onetime thing because the Holy Spirit continues to build up our faith and strengthen it through the Word and through communion. The pastor says to those who have just received the Lord's Supper, "Now may the true body and blood of the Lord strengthen and preserve you in the true faith unto life everlasting."

Holy Spirit leads us to speak the Word to others. The Holy Spirit leads people to receive training for the pastoral and teaching ministry and then leads them to serve in various congregations. We have several sons and daughters of our congregation who recently graduated from our seminary or from Martin Luther College who have been assigned to serve in congregations in our Synod. Jacob Heyn to be pastor in Wasilla, Alaska; Samantha Kiecker to be teacher in Palm Coast Florida; Sara Wentzel as teacher in Iron Ridge, Wisconsin; the twin brother

of our Pastor Pflughoeft to Temecula, California; and Daniel Sprain as pastor to West Fargo, North Dakota. Daniel's father had served for ten years as pastor in our congregation.

So here we are, sinners and saints that we be! Our salvation is in the hands of our Triune God. Signed by God the Father, Sealed by God the Son, and Delivered by God the Holy Spirit!