

**Hallowed Three-In-One
Lord's Prayer: Rooted and Grounded in Love
Matthew 6:9-13**

We're in the Lord's Prayer as you know.

Jesus is praying to His Father and His disciples come to Him, observe something of Jesus' praying, His approach to His Father, His intimacy with the father, and ask Him, "Lord, teach us to pray."

But the prayer poses a challenge to us doesn't it?

Who is Jesus praying to? If Jesus is God, whom is Jesus praying to?

Others have asked me as we continue through this series, spending considerable time on God as father, you have asked, where does Jesus come into the picture?

Last week Jonathan and Lynda taught on what it means to be in Christ, and Christ in us.

Where does the father come into the picture when you think about being in Christ?

As you think about this other questions might come to mind.

It's like the child who asks,

"Are we praying to two gods?"

Of course not we say.

"Then mommy, who was ruling the universe when God was sleeping in the arms of the Mother Mary?"

"Whom was God praying to in the Garden of Gethsemane?"

"When Jesus cried out, 'My God, why have you forsaken me?' was God forsaking Himself?"

"Did God die on the cross?"

How many of you have had these questions?

Good. You and I should have these questions about the Father and the Son? And the Father and the Spirit.

It's called the doctrine of the Trinity.

Q: Before we dive into some hard work I want to begin with two questions? Regarding the Trinity...

1. What does it all mean? 2. What does it all matter?"

What does it mean to say in the apostle's creed and sing in hymns and choruses "God in three persons, blessed Trinity"?

And then what does it matter tomorrow morning in the office, in the classroom, in the home, in work and in play?

What are the implications of the Trinity as we grapple with gender equality? Equality period. Does it impact how we do church? How people view the role of women in the church and in leadership?

How we view and treat other ethnic groups?

How we treat the poor?

Does our understanding of Trinity have any impact on how we see the world and live in it?

What are the everyday consequences of knowing God as Trinity?

As you will see in coming weeks, the implications are huge.

In my study I have been particularly blessed and enriched by Darrell Johnson, the NT professor from regent.

TS: But in order for us to get to the “What does it all matter?” We need to first take the time to answer “What it all means?”

Fact is, any way you slight it, thinking about God as three-in-
oneness – as trinity is plain hard work.

I think it can be invigorating, but there is no denying it, it is plain hard work.

The Trinitarian nature of God is a mystery.

Let me define mystery.

“Mystery is something no rational argument can ultimately demonstrate and which no empirical reality can conclusively illustrate.”

How many of you are Ok with mystery? Some are more able to live in mystery but some have a more difficult time.

But mystery doesn't have to mean absurdity.

We may not be able to fully explain the doctrine of the Trinity but it doesn't mean it's absurd.

Just because it's a mystery, doesn't mean we throw up our hands and shut down our brains.

No, we're called to love the Lord with our whole mind as well as our whole heart.

Most of us cling to some simplistic model or illustration to help us get our minds around the mystery of Trinity and call it done.

All because we admit we can't get our finite minds around the concept so we create some simplistic model because we think it's the best we can do.

Water: Ice – solid; liquid and vapour.

I'm a Father, Husband and Son. One person – three roles.

Whatever metaphor we try to use it comes up short.

Closer to heresy than to fact.

Truth is many people consider the theology of the Trinity as some riddle, wrapped inside a puzzle.

There's a story of a worship leader.

He's leading his people through the Athanasian Creed.

It's the Creed that has phrases like, "we worship one God in Trinity, and Trinity in Unity, neither confounding the Persons, nor dividing the Substance."

And phrases like "The Father uncreated, the Son uncreated, the Holy Spirit uncreated. The Father eternal. The Son eternal. The Holy Spirit eternal."

And phrases like, "The Father incomprehensible. The Son incomprehensible. The Holy Spirit incomprehensible."

After the worship leader led the last line, reiterating that the Father, Son and Spirit were incomprehensible, he was heard to mutter under his breath, "the whole thing is incomprehensible."

Yes, it is incomprehensible. It's a mystery. To get our minds around it is hard work, but rich, important work.

Work that will only serve to enrich and enliven our faith in God.

But we must understand that in grappling with the teaching of God-in-three-persons, we are not thinking human thoughts about God, we are in fact thinking God's thoughts about God.

Darrel Johnson says, "Trinity is God's way of being God."

It's God's way, not our way.

I like what CS Lewis said in one of his radio broadcasts on this very subject.

"If Christianity was something we were making up, of course we could make it easier. But it is not. We cannot compete in simplicity with people who are inventing religions. How could we? We are dealing with fact. Of course anyone can be simple if he does not have any facts to bother about."

So what are the facts? The basic fact is Jesus Himself. The closer you get to Jesus; you can't help but be led to the father and the Spirit.

Embrace Jesus – He takes you by the hand and leads you to the Father. Introduces you to the Holy Spirit.

But there are other facts. Fact is Trinity is not mentioned in the bible. It doesn't appear in the scriptures.

Some background. An early church theologian named Tertullian in the 3rd Century coined it.

Before him people were using words like triad and monad to describe God's nature.

That was their best attempt.

But both words were not conveying biblical ideas of God. Didn't work. Were not biblical.

So he coined this word Trinity. To describe the three-fold-ness of God's nature.

And he did it to help the church make sense of the facts we see all through scripture.

Like I said, the intention was to not steer people off track, but so their friends and enemies could come to a living faith in Jesus.

You see this mind stretching doctrine we call the Trinity didn't emerge out of ivory tower think-tank. A bunch of philosophers in the back room. But it emerged out of the life and mission of ordinary followers of Jesus, groups of Christians, churches, and congregations in the early church, pastors, elders and deacons seeking to faithfully present and communicate Jesus.

A group of people seeking to faithfully lead their flocks into the fullness of life in Christ.

They simply wanted to worship and pray in ways that were worthy of the Living God whom they had come to know in Jesus.

They were ordinary disciples, followers of Jesus just like you and I who were attempting to understand and make known the good news of Jesus.

The cool thing that while Tertullian was coming to these conclusions about God's character and essence, so were theologians and elders and pastors from all around the world (Tertullian, Athanasius, Basil, St. Ephrem and others).

The wrestling, searching, theologizing that was going on in Greece and Rome was also going on in Syria, Europe and Asia.

Churches and congregations all over the world.

All coming to the same conclusions.

People often come to the conclusion that since the word Trinity is not mentioned in scripture, that it's a man-made idea. That it's therefore not biblical.

But in reality, though the word isn't mentioned, if you pour over the scriptures, this idea of three-fold-ness or three-in-oneness is on every page.

On every page we encounter what the church historian Jaroslav Pelikan has called the "footprints of the Trinity."

Everything points to God-in-three-ness.

Let's look at the Old Testament.

Deut. 6:4 says, "Listen, O Israel! The Lord is our God, the Lord alone."

You might remember that Jesus recited this same creed in one of His many dialogues with the Pharisees.

Mark 12:28-30 says, "One of the teachers of religious law was standing there listening to the debate. He realized that Jesus had answered well, so he asked, 'Of all the commandments, which is the most important?' Jesus replied, 'The most important commandment is this: 'Listen, O Israel! The Lord our God is the one and only Lord. And you must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your mind, and all your strength.'"

So even Jesus taught that Yahweh is one.

But what was meant by the term 'one' in Jesus' day?

Rather than something solitary or numerical oneness, the word one in scripture is seldom used in the bible to describe a digit.

Instead it means “once-for-all, unique, only, only one, or unitary.”

Tertullian therefore argued that from all eternity, God is one, but never was He alone.

Look at the first verse in the bible.

Genesis 1:1 says, “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.”

The Hebrew word for God in this passage is Elohim.

Elohim is a plural noun.

This is to communicate some sort of plurality in the one God.

This is even more striking in **Gen. 1:26** where it says, “Let us make humanity in our image, according to our likeness.”

Notice the personal pronouns “us” and “our” are plural.

Now some people suggest that this is referring to the presence of angels in the creation.

God’s angelic hosts surrounding the throne singing “holy, holy, holy.”

But the problem we have with this is that no-where in scripture does it imply that humans were created in the image of angels.

Scripture says that we were created in God’s image.

It seems that the “us” and “our” refers to God Himself.

Consider some more traces of this three-fold-ness.

Psalm 24:9-10

Lift up your heads, O gates...
That the King of Glory may come in.
Who is this King of Glory?
Yahweh of hosts.
He is the King of Glory.

Here is the living God called “Lord of hosts.” Yahweh of hosts.

Some scholars now argue that the phrase should be translated “Yahweh who is hosts.”
“Suggesting that there within the One Lord is an inherent multiplicity, a community.”

That at the centre of the universe is relationship.
Community...not just community but communion.

This has incredible implications as to why we so crave relationship.

Why in Genesis it says “it is not good for man and women to be alone.” We are created in God’s image, created to be in relationship.

Why it is so devastating when relationships break apart, we are created in God’s image, created to be in community – to be one, not split or fractured.

The goal is Oneness.

Interesting that the ancient scriptures say.

“God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and will be united to his wife, and they will become One.”

Not broken.. Not fragmented...but One.

Our world is beautiful in many ways. Looking around us how can you dispute that?

But look deeper we all know our world is torn, broken, and fractured with pieces lying on the floor.

God as trinity, three in oneness tells us that we too are created to be one. In unity. Reconciled. Not isolated, alone, but in relationship.

Your marriages, your relationships, church families, are designed to counter this. Not to add to the brokenness of the world but to add to the oneness of the world.

This is just one rich implication of the trinity.

Back to the traces and footprints of Trinity all through the scriptures.

Another fact that pervades all through the OT revelation of God is this mysterious personality called the Angel of the Lord.

We first meet this character in **Genesis 16** when the Angel of the Lord appears to Hagar. Interesting that when she encounters the Angel of the Lord she concludes that she has seen God.

He appears again in the burning bush, the event in **Exodus 3**.

Verse 3 it says the angel of the Lord appeared to Moses in the burning bush. Then in verse 4 the text mentions simply the Lord.

Then in verse 6 it says, “Moses was afraid to look at God.”

Somehow this encounter with the angel of the Lord is an encounter with the Lord who is One.

Then we have the perplexing event recorded in **Genesis 18** just before the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah where the text says that Yahweh appeared to Abraham.

Gen 18:2 says Abraham looked up and noticed three men standing nearby. In the ensuing conversation both the plural and the singular alternate, then in verse 13 the speaker is Yahweh.

Then the men identified as two angels make their way for Sodom.

But Abraham is left talking to Yahweh.

Some early preachers took this text to depict the trinity, and were likely mistaken, reading too much into the text, but the text does suggest some sort of plurality to the nature of One Lord.

Then we have the texts, which speak of or give reference to God's Spirit.

Gen. 1 which says "And the Spirit of God hovered over the deep."

Another example is **Isa. 63:9-14**, which says,

"When they suffered, he suffered with them.
He sent his angel to save them.
He set them free because he is loving and kind.
He lifted them up and carried them.
He did it again and again in days long ago.
But they refused to obey him.
They made his Holy Spirit sad.
So he turned against them and became their enemy.
He himself fought against them.
Then his people remembered what he did long ago.
They recalled the days of Moses and his people.
They asked, "Where is the God who brought
Israel through the Red Sea?
Moses led them as the shepherd of his flock.
Where is the God who put
his Holy Spirit among them?
He used his glorious and powerful arm
to help Moses.
He parted the waters of the sea in front of them.
That mighty act made him famous forever.
He led them through that deep sea.
Like a horse in open country,
they didn't trip and fall.
They were like cattle that are taken down to the plains.
They were given rest by the Spirit of the Lord."

That's how he guided his people.
So he made a glorious name for himself."

The point is that when the Hebrew people understood God as One, they were not thinking numerical oneness. But rather an idea of relational oneness. The Lord is one in some way a community or a fellowship.

Isn't it interesting that in the **book of Acts when the Holy Spirit came upon them, there was this fellowship.**

The word in the Greek is Koinonia, which can also be, translated communion.

It was this idea in the early church of close-knit fellowship of the Spirit filled membership of the church.
Marked by sharing and self-sacrifice.

The ultimate example of this koinonia between brothers and sisters in Christ was when they shared in the Lord's Supper, participating in the body and the blood of Jesus.

Communion between God and the Saints.

It is through Christ's work on the cross you and I are ushered into, invited into fellowship with the Father, Son and the Spirit.

Invited into this dance. The Orthodox Church fathers called it Peri choresus – which means circle dance, between Father, Son and Spirit. Relational inter-connectedness.

Catherine LaCugna says this. "Perichoresis, embodied in inclusiveness, community and freedom, is thus the form of life

for God and the idea of human being whose communion with each other reflects the life of the trinity.”

Koinonia, communion, unity in spirit, all flows out of who God is, this three-fold-ness of God.

No wonder our hearts break when relationships are out of sync. When there’s unresolved issues. Brokenness and disunity. No wonder when the oneness of marriage is fractured it causes such chaos.

No wonder it breaks the heart of God because it goes against the very nature of God; and goes against the very nature of how we were created as image bearers of this Trinitarian, three-fold-ness nature of God.

All through scripture we see traces. Footprints of the Trinity. Three-fold-ness of God.

Perhaps this is why the angelic hosts sing to the living God with three fold refrain, “Holy, Holy, Holy” in **Isa 6**.

Perhaps it is why God commanded the priests to place his name on his people with a three-fold benediction.

‘May the Lord bless you
and protect you.
May the Lord smile on you
and be gracious to you.
May the Lord show you his favor
and give you his peace.”

All these texts do affirm that there is a multiplicity, a plurality within the unity of God’s being.

Darrell Johnson says, “In ancient Israelite religion, the oneness of God did not mean that God could not be differentiated.”

The ancient Israelites got this a lot better than we do. Chalk it up to the enlightenment but we have a difficult time understanding this.

But this is just the OT.

What about the NT?

Consider what is proclaimed at Jesus’ conception.

The angel says to Mary, “The angel replied, ‘The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the baby to be born will be holy, and he will be called the Son of God.’”

Here we see three persons:

1. The Holy Spirit
2. The Most High
3. The Son of God

How about Jesus’ baptism?

“After his baptism, as Jesus came up out of the water, the heavens were opened and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and settling on him. And a voice from heaven said, “This is my dearly loved Son, who brings me great joy.”

Here we have the Spirit who descends, the voice from heaven, which speaks, and the son with whom God is well pleased.

All through Jesus' earthly ministry Jesus speaks of a relationship with a Father and a Spirit.

- he only sees what he sees his father doing
- he only does what he does in the power of the Holy Spirit
- He has come to make his father known to his disciples
- He has come to baptize his disciples in and with the Spirit
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And he says that when the Holy Spirit comes, even though he comes in Jesus' stead, his coming is of Jesus and of the Father as well.

And when the Spirit of God does come at Pentecost, the three-fold-ness appears in Scripture all the more.

1 Peter 1:2

2 God the Father knew you and chose you long ago, and his Spirit has made you holy. As a result, you have obeyed him and have been cleansed by the blood of Jesus Christ.

Titus 3:4-6

When God our Savior revealed his kindness and love, **5** he saved us, not because of the righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He washed away our sins, giving us a new birth and new life through the Holy Spirit.[a] **6** He generously poured out the Spirit upon us through Jesus Christ our Savior.

1 Corinthians 6:15a, 19-20

15a Don't you realize that your bodies are actually parts of Christ? **19** Don't you realize that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, who lives in you and was given to you by God? You do not belong to yourself, **20** for God bought you with a high price. So you must honor God with your body.

1 Cor. 12:4-6

There are different kinds of spiritual gifts, but the same Spirit is the source of them all. **5** There are different kinds of service, but we serve the same Lord. **6** God works in different ways, but it is the same God who does the work in all of us.

But it really reaches this crescendo in the book of Ephesians.

Eph. 2:18

Now all of us can come to the Father through the same Holy Spirit because of what Christ has done for us.

Eph 2:19-22

So now you Gentiles are no longer strangers and foreigners. You are citizens along with all of God's holy people. You are members of God's family. Together, we are his house, built on the foundation of the apostles and the prophets. And the cornerstone is Christ Jesus himself. We are carefully joined together in him, becoming a holy temple for the Lord. Through him you Gentiles are also being made part of this dwelling where God lives by his Spirit."

Eph 4:4-6

For there is one body and one Spirit, just as you have been called to one glorious hope for the future. There is one Lord, one faith, one baptism,

one God and Father of all,
who is over all, in all, and living through all.”

Eph 3:14-16

“When I think of all this, I fall to my knees and pray to the Father,[a] **15** the Creator of everything in heaven and on earth.[b] **16** I pray that from his glorious, unlimited resources he will empower you with inner strength through his Spirit.”

We shouldn't be surprised that the NT writers speak this way.

Jesus said, “Jesus came and told his disciples, “I have been given all authority in heaven and on earth. **19** Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations,[b] baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.”

By Jesus own definition the Christian life, what it means to walk with God is all about relationship with the one whose name is three-fold.

To be a disciple is to be immersed into, and with, the three fold-ness of the living God.

But even if there were not traces of this three-fold-ness all through the scriptures, we would have likely still landed on the trinity.

Why?

What happened when ordinary people encountered Jesus?

What did they do?

They worshipped.

I like how **Darrell Johnson** puts it.

“When the disciples saw Jesus they worshipped him. If there is a scandal in the Christian faith, it lies not in the doctrine of the Trinity but in the believer's response to Jesus: Worship. The phenomenon occurred before the post resurrection appearance on the mountain. It began when he was just a baby in Bethlehem's stable. Rough, rugged shepherds, sophisticated wise men could not help falling on their knees before the infant Jesus and adore Him. Was that right to do? The phenomenon occurred after Jesus' post resurrection appearance. It became the dominant mark of the early church's life. Around 112 AD the Roman governor Pliny observed that Christians gathered on the first day of the week to sing hymns to Christ 'as if to a god.' Was it right for these early Christians to do that?”

John 20:26-29 we read...

“Eight days later the disciples were together again, and this time Thomas was with them. The doors were locked; but suddenly, as before, Jesus was standing among them. “Peace be with you,” he said. Then he said to Thomas, “Put your finger here, and look at my hands. Put your hand into the wound in my side. Don't be faithless any longer. Believe!” “My Lord and my God!” Thomas exclaimed. Then Jesus told him, “You believe because you have seen me. Blessed are those who believe without seeing me.”

Thomas falls on his knees in worship uttering the only words he could utter.

“My Lord and my God.”

So if Thomas’ words were idolatry, heresy, why didn’t Jesus rebuke him and tell him to get off his knees. To not worship him?

He didn’t.

We must consider that the people who fell down in worship of Jesus as God were monotheistic Jews, whose foundational Creed was “Hear O Israel, the Lord is one God”, we have to pay attention.

As monotheistic Jews, what were they doing worshipping Jesus as Lord? If he wasn’t in fact Lord.

If Jesus were just another creature, like some angel, or a wise prophet, even if he is the greatest of created beings, then worship of him would be idol worship. Heresy.

But if Jesus is not just another created being, if He is the Uncreated Creator, then worshipping Him is wholly and completely appropriate.

So the question is. What do we do with Jesus?

Embrace Him as Lord and He will faithfully lead you to the Father.

It does come down to Jesus.

The more we encounter, and worship Jesus, the more we will find ourselves caught up in this relationship, the relationship of

all relationships at the centre of the universe, surrounded and embraced by Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Application:

Invited into the dance; baptized, immersed into this union with Father Son and Holy Spirit.

Invited into the dance, into this Oneness with Father, Son and Spirit.

The doorway is Jesus. The pathway is Jesus. The Way is Jesus. Take him by the hand and he’ll lead you to the Father and the Spirit.

The more we press into Jesus in worship, the more we open ourselves up to the Father, Son and Spirit.

Also, it’s oneness and unity in relationship. At the centre of the universe is relationship. At the centre of the universe is community. It is out of that relationship that you and I are created and redeemed.

Why broken relationships hurt so much. We are created to be in relationship.

Why scripture mentions this word righteousness so many times.

Righteousness essentially means right relationship.

Why you and I are given this ministry of reconciliation. Pursuing right relationship with God through Christ.

And then pursuing right relationship with one another. With humanity.

Embrace this mission – not to add to the brokenness of the world, but to be agents of restoration; to be wounded healers.

To see our soul expand through pain, rather than contract we need Jesus.

Pray