

No Time for a Knapsack Faith Matthew 28:16-20

A pilot was flying three passengers in his King Air twin turbo plane – an Eagle scout, a priest, and an atomic scientist. Midway through the flight the plane that develops engine trouble in mid-flight.

The pilot rushes back to the passenger compartment and exclaims, “The plane is going down! We only have three parachutes, and there are four of us! I have a family waiting for me at home. I must survive!” With that, he grabs one of the parachutes and jumps out of the plane.

The atomic scientist jumps to his feet and says, “I am the smartest man in the world. It would be a great tragedy if my life ended so soon!” With that, he also grabs a parachute and jumps out of the plane.

The priest and the Eagle Scout look at each other, “My son,” says the priest, “I have no family. I am ready to meet my Maker. You are still young with much ahead of you. You take the last parachute.”

The Eagle Scout interrupts him and says, “Relax, Father. We’ll be fine. The world’s smartest man jumped out of the plane wearing my knapsack!”

Metaphorically, there are many smart, successful, affluent people today jumping out of airplanes wearing knapsacks instead of parachutes. They are reaching for ideas and philosophies that are very appealing, but will not save them. Knapsacks, not parachutes. Today, more than ever, people need something to believe in, and many are looking in the wrong places.

Richard Fuller, systems theorist, author, designer, inventor, and architect best known for the geodesic dome design, once said: “The universe is a locked safe with the combination on the inside.” Fuller was an amazing and brilliant man, but in this case he was wrong. The universe is not a locked safe with the combination inside.

I believe that there is meaning and purpose to this world and that this meaning and purpose is available to all those who seek it. The early church summed up the truth about this meaning and purpose in a doctrine known as the Trinity: God, the Father; God, the Son; God, the Holy Spirit.

Now it’s sometimes difficult to get people excited about Christian doctrines:

- Prolegomena – the doctrine that Scripture is the basis of theology
- Theology Proper – the doctrine of God
- Christology – the doctrine of Christ
- Cosmology – the doctrine of how things were created
- Hamartiology – the doctrine of sin
- Soteriology – the doctrine of salvation
- Ecclesiology – the doctrine of the church
- Eschatology – the doctrine of end times.

But it’s especially true of the doctrine of the Trinity. It sounds so deep and so mysterious. But there are important truths that you and I need to see about the Trinity. And let’s start here.

You won’t find the word “Trinity” in the Bible. In fact, you won’t find the word “Trinity” in the writings of the early church fathers until the third century. The concept of the Trinity is a product of the third century church, based upon a sound Biblical faith.

The doctrine of the Trinity - God as Father, God as Son and God as Holy Spirit - properly understood meets the deep needs we have in understanding who God is and what our relationship to Him is all about. Let's dig deeper

We begin with God as the creator and sustainer of life. God the Father: Omnipotent, Omniscient, Omnipresent, everlasting. God who spoke and the world was created. God who guides the stars, rules the heavens, orders the planets in their orbits.

The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, Jael, Hannah, Abigail, Esther, and Eunice. God transcendent in authority, Lawgiver, Judge, whose ways are not our ways, whose glory is told by the heavens.

This is the God in whom we believe, as do most of the people in the world, but who seems far removed, out of touch, unapproachable, unyielding. And this God intimidates us. Why is that?

It's because our tiny brains can't wrap our head around God is beyond space and time, who created everything that exists, and so we start to believe that this God has distanced Himself from us, when in fact we've distanced ourselves from Him.

And this is why God the Father revealed His true nature in a gentle, compassionate man of Jesus of Nazareth. **In Jesus we see God the Son who cradles young children in his arms, and treats all people with dignity and respect.** In Jesus, the Son, we're exposed to the approachable side of God, who gave his life for those He created out of the clay of earth.

Without Jesus we would never know what God is really like. Jesus told us to call Him, Abba, Father, taught us about God's love, showed us God's grace.

In the mid-1950s, five missionaries were slaughtered in South America by a tribe of Auca ("Ow-kah") Indians. Incredibly, sometime later this same Auca tribe welcomed the wife of one of the martyred missionaries and the sister of another missionary into their community. It was an amazing reversal of attitude on the part of the Aucas. It allowed missionaries to begin translating the New Testament into the language of the Aucas.

But that translation effort was not without difficulties.

For example, translators had had a hard time putting the word "reconciled" into the Auca language. One of the most important verses in the New Testament is 2 Corinthians 5:18, "All this is from God, who *reconciled* us to himself through Christ."

Reconciliation is a critical word in understanding the Christian faith, but there is no equivalent word in the Auca language for it. Until one day a translator was traveling through the jungle with some of the Aucas when they came to a narrow, deep ravine. The missionary thought the journey was over, but the Aucas took out their machetes and cut down a large tree so that it fell over the ravine, allowing them to cross safely.

Listening intently, the translator discovered that the Aucas' had a word for "a tree across the ravine" and decided this word would serve as a substitute for reconciliation. Jesus was the tree laid across the chasm that separated humanity from God.

Christ is our bridge to God and God is our source of salvation. We are grateful for God the Father in all His power and glory. But also to God the Son for all his gentleness and grace, who allows us to approach God with confidence. Because of Christ, we know that God is our Father who loves us more than we'll ever fully understand. We know that because of Christ the Son.

And the third person in the Trinity, just as important as the first two, **is the God the Holy Spirit.** The Holy Spirit is the presence of God in our daily lives today. The Holy

Spirit is the inner witness of the reality of God. The Holy Spirit is the confirming testimony that God the creator is with us.

According to I John 4:13, our life in the world is actually Christ's life lived within us accomplished through the work of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is that presence in our lives that allows us to get our lives together, to achieve spiritual discipline, to take charge of our lives and channel our actions in ways that glorify God and enrich the world.

The word "organize" has a Latin root word that suggests something akin to playing an organ, especially a pipe organ. To play a pipe organ one must get all the pipes to sound harmoniously. And when one pipe is out of tune, the whole of the sound is off.

For many of us, we're restrained and restricted from being effective and successful in life because inner conflicts are tearing us apart. The pipes of our music are not harmonious. A war is being waged internally, and we're being pushed and pulled from within. We desperately need the Spirit of God to enter our lives and take charge of those warring thoughts and feelings and bring them together into harmony.

To achieve that we must surrender all we are and all we hope to be to the presence and power of God. Sadly, many of us will only partially submit to God's Spirit. We want to stay in control.

A letter was mailed to General Electric from a girl in the third grade who wanted to research electricity for a class project. She wrote, "I'm trying to get all the information on electricity I can," her letter said, "so please send me any booklets and papers you have. Also would it be too much to ask you to send me a little sample of electricity?"

In like fashion, many of us want just a little sample of the Spirit. We don't want the Spirit to come in all its fullness. We tremble at the idea of God coming into our lives and having total control of our thoughts, our feelings, our dreams, our ambitions. So we research God, sample Him now and again, and because of that we never achieve that oneness of mind and purpose so necessary for effective Christian living.

The Holy Spirit is the inward evidence and indwelling presence that allows us to organize and prioritize our lives, that gives us the peace and assurance to cope daily with life's varied demands.

In 1 Samuel 16 we read that God had chosen King Saul to rule over Israel, but Saul was a disappointment to God. And so in verse 25 we read that the Spirit of the Lord left King Saul. And when that happened, Saul was filled with depression and fear.

So many Christians today are filled with depression and fear somehow the Holy Spirit has slipped out of their lives. It's the Holy Spirit that gives a lift to our lives, air under our wings, and helps us stand on higher ground. Without the Spirit in our lives we are lost.

The doctrine of the Trinity is so vitally important to us. God the Father- creator, sustainer, the Source of all that is or was or will ever be. God the Son- Savior, Redeemer, who gave his life for us that we might know how much God loves us. God the Holy Spirit--the evidence of the indwelling Christ and our enabler in life's daily crises.

This is the Trinity. Why, then, do we settle for a knapsack? In the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.