

May 30, 2021. Trinity Sunday. John 3: 1 – 17. Isaiah 6: 1 – 8 send me.

We ARE trinitarians. We all say it, we all know it. Yet we rarely ever talk about it. In fact, a lot of people with whom I have spoken don't even know exactly what it means! And others wonder why there's debate about it, and how some Christians aren't, or never have been, Trinitarian. Then again, the whole notion of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit being all part of the same thing, "of one substance," as we say, well, it's not concrete, and it's not specific, and it's not really defined in Scripture. Jesus does say, "The Father and I are one," and "if you have seen me you have seen the Father," but he also says he will send the Holy Spirit, which he never really specifically says is part of his own self. On the other hand, Jesus does tell the disciples to go out and baptize people in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. It's difficult to figure it all out sometimes, especially the Holy Spirit part, because the Holy Spirit doesn't ever speak directly in Scripture, and there are no reported sightings. It often doesn't seem to make sense. I guess I've been saying that a lot lately, that things don't seem to make sense. At the end of the day, we just have to trust. Have faith. Live in the mystery!

But that just seems like the stock excuse. Live in the mystery. Ha! We like to have things defined. Wait. Let me rephrase that. We NEED to have things defined. The newest catch word everywhere you go, is metrics. In baseball, all you hear about are the stats, the metrics. Coaches barely trust their own instincts anymore, because they have the metrics. And it happens across the board in life. Why, I've even caught myself

seeing rain out the window, then checking my weather app to see if that's right!!! Hey: be honest: When the weatherman says it's gonna rain at 2, don't you check your watch? The point is, we like, and need definition. Predictability. Concreteness. Tangible, repeatable, evidence-based proof.

But the Trinity is the opposite of that. This whole gospel text is the opposite of that. Nicodemus is positively flummoxed at the end of this secret evening conversation! He wanted to know exactly what to do, and how and when to do it. He wanted a heavenly metric. But Jesus says, there's no app for that. In fact, Jesus says that even HE doesn't know how, when, or where the Spirit will work. So I'm not quite sure why WE spend so much time and energy trying to define, predict, control the work of the Spirit!

Where are you in your life on this particular day? We're all probably feeling a lot of things right now, wondering what's going to happen next, and it's especially now that you probably want—and deserve—some clarity, some definition, some answers. IF you're listening from First Lutheran right now, it's just a week before you re-open for live worship after 16 months! For us here at St. John's, we've turned everything inside out again with all the complications of masks and no masks in the same worship service! It's normal to feel like Nicodemus right now. Maybe the past year has been hard, but this is no slouch—I've been saying that exiting the pandemic will be harder than entering it. If there ever were an uneasy, confusing, mysterious, transitional time, it's right now! Then again—that is exactly why Jesus came. And that is exactly why he said,

last week, that he would in fact send the Advocate, who would intercede on YOUR behalf. And that is exactly why Jesus is telling Nicodemus—and us—to trust in that advocate, trust in that Holy Spirit. Hey: not for nothing, but if none of this makes sense to you, at least take comfort in the fact that **even Jesus was not worried about the unpredictability of the future**. Because he knew this: the Spirit will arrive. The promises will be kept. There will be rebirth. And the mission of Christ in the world will be accomplished, even if it's not how, or when, we think.

Nicodemus eventually got used to the idea that he, too, had to live in that mystery, and he ended up playing a very important role at the end of Jesus' earthly life. This may be a very difficult period for you, for all of us, but this is really a pinnacle moment of faith. A moment to trust in God's workings in our lives and in our congregations. A moment to surrender to the unknown; but more importantly, it is a moment to remember your core mission—which is to give thanks to God for the empty cross; to wait for the wind of the Spirit; and in the meantime, to continue to be sent to meet the needs of the people around you—all while trusting in the mystery of this beyond comprehension three-in-one God—who loves you, cares for you, and advocates for you! So that even in the most confusing, mysterious times, you, too can sense the peace that passes all understanding; which will in turn allow you to say, “Here I am, Lord. Send me.”

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.