

June 12, 2022

Acts 2:22-36

“Calm in the Midst of Chaos!”

Pilgrim Lutheran Church  
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Decatur, Illinois 62526

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

The doctrine of the Trinity is a profound mystery that is far beyond all human comprehension. Nevertheless, the truth that there is one God and three distinct persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, has been given to us for an eternal reason. The teaching of the Trinity takes us to the only true God, who not only has an eternal destination for us in mind, but who has saved us by giving the only one who can save us - the Son of God made flesh!

You can't get more practical than that. God truly cares for us and loves us and wants us to be with him in bliss forever. By teaching us the distinction of the persons, we are brought to the eternal truth that the one who made us gives himself. The Father so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son. The Son of God became one of us by the working of the Holy Spirit so that our rebellion and death might be replaced with forgiveness and eternal life - a glorious destination. Jesus of Nazareth lived a sinless life for us and suffered and died for each and every one of our sins on the cross so that we might be forever in the presence of the only true God.

The Athanasian Creed states: "This is the true Christian faith. Unless a man believe this firmly and faithfully, he cannot be saved." I hope you don't mind me placing these familiar words of 1 John 3:9-12 in front of you this morning - we should never tire of hearing them:

In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him. In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us.

The Trinity is mysterious, and it is beyond all human comprehension, but God has chosen to reveal much about Himself to us lowly creatures. And isn't that what we really want - to be known and to know the one who brought us into existence - he who is life and love? John also writes in chapter four verse sixteen of his first epistle: "So we have come to know and to believe the love that God has for us. God is love, and whoever abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him." True love! God's love and love for each other. We are not alone. We are not abandoned to forever be in chaos.

There is so much against us reaching our destination. This is why the apostle admonishes us to abide in Jesus that he may abide in us. As I think about our reaching the destination of heaven I am frequently bothered about the unknown days and years that are ahead. Do you ever wonder to yourself if you're going to get there? Or, maybe it isn't as much as getting there as it is simply getting through the days and the years. My thoughts drift to Psalm 46. Before I quote a portion of the Psalm I would like to point out that I find it to be **Calm in the Midst of Chaos**. That's the theme for today. Listen carefully:

God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear though the earth gives way, though the mountains be moved into the heart of the sea, though

its waters roar and foam, though the mountains tremble at its swelling ... The nations rage, the kingdoms totter; he utters his voice, the earth melts. The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress ... “Be still, and know that I am God. I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth!”

This psalm ties in beautifully with our second reading. In that reading we are told that Jesus is exalted at the right hand of God. The fact that Jesus is exalted at the right hand of God is supposed to be a guarantee of **Calm in the Midst of Chaos**. With God’s help we are going to get there. With God’s help we are going to somehow make it through the days and the years. We see this in Jesus who is exalted with our flesh. In Jesus we will be exalted. This is designed to calm us.

There’s a lot of chaos that is standing in the way. The psalm talks about the roaring of natural disasters with God as our refuge. There is the raging of the nations and God’s voice that brings them to an end. There is the incredible, encouraging words that are an echo of Exodus 14:13-14, “And Moses said to the people, ‘Fear not, stand firm, and see the salvation of the Lord, which he will work for you today. For the Egyptians whom you see today, you shall never see again. *The Lord will fight for you, and you have only to be silent.*”

Those words should mean a lot to us right now as we see tremendous upheaval today. These words were spoken when the Israelites were in dire circumstances with a sea blocking their way and enemies behind them. They were close to the moment when waters would be divided. They would safely cross through the Red sea on dry ground in the midst of the chaos of their enemies and the waters that were on both sides of them. And those waters that were at one point blocking them in would now drown their enemies. This is how God takes care of his people. Let us not be afraid. May we take heart! Again, the Lord will fight for you, and you have only to be silent. **Calm in the Midst of Chaos!**

I know there is a lot of general chaos in our lives. I feel it myself. There are also those thing unique to each of us. Our enemies are in love with themselves and with whatever serves them. They present themselves as godly while denying the gospel of Jesus. The Scripture describes them as “... lovers of money, proud, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, heartless, unappeasable, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not loving good, treacherous, reckless, swollen with conceit, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God ... (2 Tim. 3:2-4).” Still, the righteousness of the Lord draws near. His salvation goes out. He will judge the peoples. And as far as the creation is concerned, Isaiah writes: “Lift up your eyes to the heavens, and look at the earth beneath; for the heavens vanish like smoke, the earth will wear out like a garment, and they who dwell in it will die in like manner; but my salvation will be forever, and my righteousness will never be dismayed (51:6).”

Everything is a mess and this is becoming more plain to see and intense. But we should not be surprised at the violence, for this was the way it was before the flood. We should not be surprised at the economic upheaval, for the scales are not balanced, as it says in the book of Revelation. How can we be shocked at war and famine and pestilence and the roaring and tossing of the sea when Scripture has warned us of all these things? And our Lord Jesus Christ himself has made it clear that “ Brother will deliver

brother over to death, and the father his child, and children will rise against parents and have them put to death, and you will be hated by all for my name's sake ..." Jesus adds, "But the one who endures to the end will be saved (Matt. 10:21-22)." I think that we are overwhelmed. All we want is calm.

"Be still, and know that I am God. I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth," it says in Psalm 46. Christ has overcome the world and has been exalted. We are to take heart for we will overcome the world with him and be exalted by his exaltation. This is our **Calm in the midst of Chaos**. Our Lord Jesus Christ is at the right hand of God. What that means is considerable. One of us who desires our salvation is ruling every detail of the universe for our good. In that we can be still. What does our maker desire for us? He desires to love us and bring us out of the chaos that has resulted for our rebellion.

As I was thinking of how to close this sermon my thoughts drifted to Habakkuk 3:17-19a. There the prophet writes: "Though the fig tree should not blossom, nor fruit be on the vines, the produce of the olive fail and the fields yield no food, the flock be cut off from the fold and there be no herd in the stalls, yet I will rejoice in the Lord; I will take joy in the God of my salvation. God, the Lord, is my strength ..." Perhaps we will never experience a chaotic situation so desperate as that which is described here. Then again perhaps we will. But even then, we can rejoice in God our Savior, in whom we have forgiveness of sins and eternal life. No one can ever take that away from us. Having the kingdom we have it all. And with that the guarantee of Christ that in seeing his kingdom and his righteousness, he will take care of us in such a way that it serves to that end - the kingdom (Matthew 6:33).

Amen.

Pastor Brock Abbott