

The Sunday of the Holy Trinity / May 30, 2021

John 3:16

“For God so loved the world.”

The Sunday of the Holy Trinity celebrates the majesty of God as He reveals Himself in triune form as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. What do you think it would be like to stand in the presence of the living God and see His majesty? The prophet Isaiah was drawn into the presence of God in a heavenly vision. What He saw filled his mind with awe and his heart with fear. He saw the Lord sitting upon a throne. He saw the six-winged seraphim flying and heard them saying to each other, “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory.” As he stood in awe of this glorious sight, he was overcome with terror. He cried out, “Woe is me! I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts.” In the light of the glory of the Lord he saw the uncleanness of his sin. He was filled with fear until the Lord sent an angel to touch his lips and make him clean!

Sin makes us fear in the presence of God. Adam and Eve tried to hide when they heard the Lord walking in the garden. We have reason to be afraid, God’s righteousness is a fire that consumes sin like a fire consumes dry grass. Nothing sinful and no one who is a sinner can stand in the presence of God, not even a good man like Isaiah. Not even Moses the law giver. In Psalm 90 Moses wrote, “You have set our iniquities before you, our secret sins in the light of your presence.” Do you have any secret sins? Thanks be to God that He loves us and knows how to keep sins secret. Thanks be to God that He loves us and atoned for our sin through the blood Jesus shed on the cross. There is nothing more wondrous than God’s love. He loved the world so much that He gave Jesus as Saviour of all people. He loves you and I so much that He forgives daily and constantly so that we have no reason to fear His majesty, but instead look forward to standing forever in His presence in the resurrection of Christ Jesus.

Have you ever felt afraid of God? When I was a child, I wasn’t afraid of God whom I couldn’t see. I was afraid of the school principal. I didn’t want to see him. I wasn’t alone! When he spoke at an assembly, it was quiet and we all listened. We feared and trembled, if we were called to his office. His office was his sanctuary. Generally speaking, students weren’t called into his office to receive a compliment. Even if someone was summoned to receive a compliment, that would have been the furthest thing from anyone’s mind as they walked down the hall. In grade two, the teacher sent a classmate to the principal’s office. He cried and pleaded as he left the room. We didn’t think we would ever see him again. How would you feel to be summoned into the presence of God? No matter how good we think we are or how we feel about God and ourselves right now, we would fear punishment. We would tremble in the presence of God more than second grader summoned to the principal’s office. We would fear because of our sin.

Consider the prophet Isaiah! Isaiah was not a coarse sinner, who despised God, or who worshipped false gods. He was a priest and prophet in service of God, yet even he was overcome with terror, because of his sin. God’s glory, beautiful to the eyes, exposes and uncovers human sin. But, because of Christ our Saviour we would also see and experience the most wondrous thing about God; His mercy in forgiveness. God sent an angel to make Isaiah clean and set his heart at ease. God sent His only begotten Son into the world to bear human sin on the cross that all who believe in Him would not perish, but would receive forgiveness and have eternal life. God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world. God sent His Son to save the world in the forgiveness of the cross. The most wonderful thing about God is His love, expressed in the giving of Jesus; experienced first and foremost as forgiveness for the sake of His sacrifice on the cross!

Isaiah’s vision of the Lord seated on a throne has a sequel in the book of Revelation. John the evangelist is more expansive in describing what he saw. He writes, “At once I was in the Spirit, and behold, a throne stood in heaven, with one seated on the throne. And He who sat there had the appearance of jasper and carnelian, and around the throne was a rainbow that had the appearance of an emerald.” Surrounding the throne were twenty-four smaller thrones upon which sat twenty-four elders. The elders fell down before the great throne and cried out, “Worthy are you, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honour and power, for you created all things, and by your will they existed and were created.” John was astonished at what he saw. Like Isaiah, he was given a glimpse of heaven.

What do you think heaven will be like? People tend to imagine heaven in terms of earthly pleasures. All you can eat and never gain weight. Golf twenty-four hours a day, forever. However, in the Christian tradition, the greatest joy of heaven is the beatific vision of God: to see the face of God and live! In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus said, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." No matter what we imagine heaven to be, or what we expect we will do, there will be nothing greater than seeing the Lord seated on His throne and looking into His eyes full of love. There was no one closer to God than Moses. God spoke to Moses as a man speaks to his friend. But in this world of sin, not even Moses could see the face of God. God told Moses, "You cannot see my face, for man shall not see me and live." Whatever we may imagine heaven will be like, we look forward to the day when our sin is forever washed away in the blood of Christ and we stand in His resurrection, pure in body and in soul and see with our own eyes, the glory of God's face and live!

We will stand in God's presence and see His face, because in the wonder of His love, God sent His Son into the world for our salvation; "For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through Him." We will see God's face, because in unfathomable love, Jesus set aside the full expression and enjoyment of His divine glory and lived as one of us; "Who though He was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but made Himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men." We will stand in the presence of God, because despite the world's hatred of God and its rebellion against His will and His ways, Jesus suffered the full consequences of human sinfulness and made full atonement for human sin through the blood of His cross; "He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins and not only for our sins but also for the sins of the whole world."

There is nothing more amazing, wonderful and incomprehensible than love. Divine love is that God sent His Son into the world and onto the cross as the atoning sacrifice for sin, so that everyone who looks on Him in faith would have forgiveness in time and life in eternity. People will do anything for love, even lay down their lives out of love. But, no one would willingly lay down her or his life for an enemy, but this is what Christ did, willingly and lovingly for you, me and every human soul; "God demonstrates His love for us in this: While we were sinners Christ died for us." We will stand in God's presence and see His face, because the Holy Spirit working through the word and by the washing of baptism, has already given us faith to see and hearts to receive Christ as our Saviour. "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whoever believes in Him would not perish, but have eternal life."

We have this promise as an anchor for our souls, because God sent His Son into the world to be our Saviour. God didn't send His Son to condemn the world. God sent His Son, because the world was already condemned by sin to sorrow, futility and death. The most amazing thing about God is His love. Isaiah felt fear in God's presence because of his sin, but God loved Isaiah despite his sin. God loves the world despite its sin. He shows continuous kindness in the cycle of the seasons. God hates sin and everything sinful is consumed by the fire of His righteousness, but God loves sinful human beings. God hates sin, but He loves this sinful world so much that He gave His Son to share our humanity, live as one of us and die for all of us that in Him we would have forgiveness and know Him as our loving Father.

God loves the world and out of infinite love and kindness, He sent His Son to save the world from sin and death, by sacrificing Himself on the cross for the atonement of human sin. This is love: God sent His Son to be our Saviour! In his first letter to Timothy, Paul called Jesus the Saviour of all people, for He died for all. He said He is the Saviour, especially of those who believe, for those who believe receive the benefits of His death and resurrection in forgiveness and eternal life. God sent His Son to be our Saviour. God sends His Spirit into our hearts that we would receive Him as Saviour and Lord. On the Sunday of the Holy Trinity as we contemplate the wonders of God, we remember that the most wonderful thing about God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit is His love, expressed in giving Christ Jesus to be our Saviour! God open minds to contemplate, our hearts to receive and our eyes to see the wonder of His love in Christ our Saviour. In His Name. Amen!