

**MIDWEEK REMINISCERE**

Text: Acts 2:14-39; St. Matthew 28:16-20

IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER, AND OF THE ✠ SON, AND OF THE HOLY SPIRIT. AMEN.

In his first letter to the Christian Church in Corinth Saint Paul writes: *“Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the SPIRIT of God dwells in you? If anyone defiles the temple of God, God will destroy him. For the temple of God is holy, which temple you are.”* And again: *“Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the HOLY SPIRIT who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own?”* And again, in his second letter to Corinth he writes: *“For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said: “I will dwell in them And walk among them. I will be their God, And they shall be My people.”*

As we discussed last Wednesday evening, when you read or hear the Sacred Texts, they are often speaking directly to and about you just as surely as they are describing real historical events and speaking of and to real historical people in the distant past. And so it is this evening. St. Paul is telling the Christians in Corinth, and by extension all Christians in all times and in all places, (and certainly, that means you and me) that they are the Temple of God, collectively and individually.

But how is it that you are a Temple of God? You are flesh and blood after all, and not mortar and stone, so how is this possible? How are you the Temple of God? Perhaps looking at the Temple of God in the Old Testament, of which you are an antitype or fulfillment, will help answer this question.

When King Solomon dedicated the Temple he had built as a house for the LORD God, his dedication prayer made one fundamental point perfectly clear; God’s Temple is God’s precisely because it bears His Name, and where His Name is, there is the forgiveness of sins. God’s Temple bears God’s Name. And what is God’s Name? How has He revealed it to us? It is the Name of the Triune God. It is *FATHER, SON, AND HOLY SPIRIT*.

Yes, *FATHER, SON, AND HOLY SPIRIT*. It is the same Name which you received in Holy Baptism. It is the Name you wear on your forehead, invisible, and yet, indelible, and though you cannot see it, God can. It is a Name given you by *JESUS*, through your pastor, with just eighteen words, *“I baptize you in the Name of the FATHER, and of the ✠ SON, and of the HOLY SPIRIT.”* It is a Name you will wear all your life, and though you can despise it, you can never become un-baptized. Properly speaking then, one should not say, *“I was baptized,”* but rather, *“I am baptized.”* And when you are baptized and bear the Name of the Triune God, you become the Temple of God, *FATHER, SON, AND HOLY SPIRIT*.

But what is this Baptism, that God should attach His Name to it? It is a ritual washing away of sin in the Triune Name of God. It is water applied by the hand of your pastor in the stead and by the command of CHRIST, but it is not simple water, rather *“it is the water included in God’s command and combined with God’s Word.”* It is water that *“works the forgiveness of sins, rescues from death and the devil, and gives eternal salvation to all who believe ....”* (Luther on the Sacrament of Holy Baptism, *The Small Catechism*) It is the Gospel applied to you by the command of God, with the hand of God, in the Name of God.

And the Name is important. It is the very heart of the rite of Baptism. Martin Luther writes in the Large Catechism: *“To be baptized in God’s Name is to be baptized not by men but by God Himself. Although it is performed by men’s hands, it is nevertheless truly God’s own act.”* (Martin Luther’s Large Catechism, Baptism, Tappert 437:10)

When an ambassador speaks *“in the name”* of a king or president, he does not speak with his own authority. He only speaks *“in the name of,”* or *“on behalf of”* the king or president. His word is the word of the one he represents. He is only authorized to say what the king or president has authorized him to say. When the ambassador announces, *“the war is over, we are at peace with you,”* it is as if the king or president himself were speaking the words. The ambassador only speaks what has been given him to speak by the one he represents.

Therefore when a *pastor* baptizes *“In the Name of the FATHER, and of the ✠ SON, and of the HOLY SPIRIT,”* it is the Triune God Himself who is baptizing, who is putting His Name on the person being baptized, just as surely as if He were standing there Himself (which indeed, He is!), because the pastor stands in the stead and by the command of JESUS as His ambassador, as His representative.

So, it is, that to baptize using any other words or any other name is nothing more than a pagan rite and no Baptism at all. Therefore, to baptize *“in the name of the mother, the child, and the spirit,”* or *“the creator, the redeemer, and the sanctifier,”* which many so-called Christian churches do today, including many that are Lutheran, is not only **not** Baptism, it is blasphemy, heresy, and gross idolatry. As a faithful professor who taught at our seminary in Saint Louis has written so succinctly: *“The LORD’s Triune Name comes first in Holy Baptism. If He had not given us His Name we would still be making up our own gods.”* (Rev. Dr. Norman Nagel, *Lutheran Worship: History and Practice.*)

In Baptism, God puts His Name on you. He claims you, dwells in you, creates faith in you, forgives you, is committed to you, blesses you, protects you wherever you are, even unto the end of the age. When God applies His Triune Name to you, you are given everything that JESUS won for you with His holy, innocent, bitter sufferings and death—eternal life and salvation through the forgiveness of your sins.

Where, then, is God the Holy Trinity to be found? He is found where CHRIST is to be found, and CHRIST is to be found in you. Holy Scripture tells us that after you are baptized, You

are in CHRIST and CHRIST is in you. In one sense, then, it is proper to say that CHRIST is found wherever you, as a baptized Christian, are to be found. And wherever CHRIST is found, there the Holy Trinity is found also. (Athanasian Creed)

What is your reaction to this statement? Do you find it comforting? I pray you do! But it may also be a bit frightening, because you are simultaneously a sinner and a saint. You often do not want to live like the Temple you are. Every time you sin, you are behaving as if CHRIST is not in you, as if the Name of the HOLY TRINITY is not on you, as if you do not belong to God, FATHER, SON, AND HOLY SPIRIT.

To sin is literally to deny that you are in CHRIST and CHRIST is in you. And we sin much. This is the reason why, as Christians, we do not become primarily focused on trying to find CHRIST *“in us.”* It is one thing to believe (by faith) that CHRIST is in you, it is quite another thing to try and find CHRIST in you.

Where, then, do Christians go every day to find CHRIST? They go outside of themselves. Christians look outside of themselves and return daily to their Baptism. JESUS tells us, *“For where two or three are gathered together in My Name, I am there in the midst of them.”* Thus, CHRIST is to be found in the Church. And where is the Church to be found? Wherever the Word is preached in all its purity and the Holy Sacraments are administered according to the Gospel. (Augsburg Confession, Article VII) There, in the Mass and prayer offices of the Church, the Triune Name is given to you again, and again, and again.

Our worship begins *“In the Name of the FATHER, and of the ✠ SON, and of the HOLY SPIRIT,”* God’s Name enters your ears at the Invocation. You trace it on your heart from the outside when you make the sign of the Cross. And with this signing of the Cross, you re-enact and remember your Baptism where you first received the Name of God, both upon the forehead and upon the heart, marking you *“as one redeemed by CHRIST the crucified.”* Only those baptized in the Triune Name of God know God, and are able to worship Him rightly.

What is right worship of God? It is coming to God to receive His gifts of mercy, forgiveness, salvation, and eternal life. It is returning to your Baptism every day with a repentant heart knowing that God will keep His promise of mercy. It is hearing and believing when you hear JESUS say, *“You are baptized, and I have forgiven you all your sins.”*

IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER, AND OF THE ✠ SON, AND OF THE HOLY SPIRIT. AMEN.

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