

St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church

Sermon: "Trinity"

Scripture: Matthew 28:16-20

Rev. Steve Filyk

May 31, 2026

Opener: Holy, holy, holy 299

Choruses: God of Wonders, This I Believe (The Creed)

After sermon: O breath of life, come sweeping through us 384,

Closer: Lord, You Give the Great Commission 778

The Christian faith doesn't always come easily.
It stretches our minds, and it stretches our hearts.

We want to earn God's love,
but the Gospel says it's a gift.
We say God is in control,
and yet our choices still matter.
We assume suffering means God is absent,
but Scripture tells us a wonderful story
of how Jesus endured suffering to save us.

And on Trinity Sunday, we are told that
God is three in one.

If you've ever wrestled with questions of faith
or have felt the emotional weight of them, you're not alone.
You will find solidarity in today's passage.

The Gospel of Matthew tells us that when the risen Christ
Appeared to the eleven disciples in Galilee
"they worshipped him; but some doubted."

Some doubted...

The life of faith doesn't come to us as something
That is altogether easy to welcome.
It requires hard work, effort,

to make sense of what we are told,
what we encounter,
And what we find difficult to believe.

Such is the doctrine of the Trinity.

You should know that Christians didn't arrive
at this concept quickly.
You won't find the word 'trinity' in your Bible,
Even though you find a unique baptismal charge
In today's reading.

It took the church years of grappling
With what they read about God in the Old Testament,
What they had heard about Jesus from eyewitnesses,
Added to their own lived experience of the Holy Spirit,
To come to a consensus that established
The definitive doctrine of one God in three persons
in the 4th century ecumenical councils.

So what does Trinity teach us?

As we reread Scripture in light of this consensus
It becomes clear that Trinity not only describes
The love-centered communion within God,
but propels the church to invite others
Into the same live-giving fellowship.

Today's lesson is often read on Trinity Sunday
Because of the baptismal charge
That Jesus gives the disciples.

They [we] are to baptise new disciples
into the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Keep in mind that even while Matthew
recorded these words of Jesus

He wouldn't have known the fullness of what they suggest,
 That "Three persons are in the one God,
 the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.
 These three are one God,
 the same in substance and equal in power and glory.

[from Cambridgepres.org.uk website: <https://www.cambridgepres.org.uk/resources/app/type/westminster-shorter-catechism/resource/400/title/q6>]

But if we look at the broader context of this passage
 We can see how this baptismal charge
 Becomes to express these ideas.

We are told that when the eleven disciples
 Meet Jesus on the mountain in Galilee,
 That they worshipped him.

Remember that practising Jews
 Didn't offer worship to anyone and everyone.
 They knew that the God who rescued them
 From Egypt was alone to be worshipped.
 What is the first commandment? No other gods. [see Deuteronomy 5:7].

Receiving Jesus with worship meant that the eleven
 [though some may have wavered]
 recognised that Jesus was God.

But this isn't the only evidence for Jesus' deity in this passage.
 Jesus claims to have received "All authority in heaven and on earth".
 That is, Jesus is the sovereign commander of all things.
 This is a role that belongs to God by definition.
 If God lacked this authority, he couldn't be called God.

Then, after giving his apostles the command to make disciples
 Jesus offers them the promise of his eternal presence.

In the Old Testament, "I am with you."
 is God's promise for people facing overwhelming callings—
 Moses, Joshua, Gideon, Jeremiah, and Israel itself.
 When Jesus tells his disciples, "Surely I am with you always" (Matthew 28:20),

he echoes these Old Testament commissioning promises.
 Another assertion that Jesus is God.

These are just three ways that Jesus asserts
 His equality with the Father.
 These, alongside many other Bible passages
 undergird the doctrine of the Trinity
 Revealing that God is not solitary,
 but Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

A God in relationship reveals something about God's character.
 God is not a monad but a community of persons.
 A community united in love.

We can see this most clearly in Jesus' baptism
 As described at the beginning of Matthew's Gospel:
 "As soon as Jesus was baptized,
 he went up out of the water.
 At that moment, heaven was opened,
 and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him.
 And a voice from heaven said,
 "This is my Son, whom I love;
 with him I am well pleased." [Matthew 3:16-17]

St. Augustine, when reflecting on the love within this relationship
 Note that Father and the Son are united in perfect love,
 and this love is not just something they share
 but is personal and eternal.
 He called the Holy Spirit the "bond of love"
 in which Father and Son dwell together (De Trinitate 15.17–19).

This is not just theology to admire—it's life to enter.

God does not create out of lack,
 but out of the overflow of love within God's own life.
 God does not save because something is missing,
 but because love overflows toward a world in need.

The Father sends the Son,
 And the Father and Son send the Spirit.
 As Jesus disciples shared in this fellowship
 with the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit
 they participated in the life of God.

But just as God shares his life with them,
 The disciples are commissioned to extend this life to others.
 They now told to make more disciples.
 They are to initiate others into the life of God
 Through baptism into the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
 They are to teach these disciples to be obedient
 To what Jesus had already shown them
 So that these new disciples can fully participate
 In the communal life God shares.

Churches will often spend much time and energy
 Trying to discern God's specific purposes for them.
 We've spent our own energy discerning the mission of St. Andrew's.
 But here in Matthew, Jesus makes this mission plain and obvious.
 We are to share the life of God we are enjoying
 By discipling others into the faith.
 Our mission is to invite others into the love and fellowship
 Of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Now, for me, this raises at least two questions.

The first question is whether we ourselves
 know the love and fellowship of the Trinity.
 Do you know what it is like to be called by the Father,
 to receive forgiveness through the Son,
 and to sense the presence of the Holy Spirit in everyday life?
 If you don't, I suggest you speak with one of our elders
 And ask them how you can share in this life with God.

The second question, equally important,

Is whether we acknowledge Jesus' commission
 To extend the love and fellowship of the Trinity to those around us
 As core to our own faith practise.

This may need some translation...
 Very few of us will have the opportunity
 Like the Apostle Paul in Athens,
 Where a group of people invites us to give a lecture
 To speak openly about the Christian faith.

But we all have friends and family and coworkers
 That we share our lives with.
 There are times when we have opportunities
 To talk about what drives us and sustains us
 About the life of God that we participate in
 And how this life is also available to them.
 Of course, it takes some courage to
 Start a conversation about faith in a culture
 that has trained us to keep quiet.

It may feel like Jesus is asking us to do something impossible
 Like solving global warming or curing cancer.

That is why even as Jesus commissions his disciples
 he promises his ongoing presence.
 When Jesus walked among them, he endured temptation,
 Faced discouragement and accomplished the impossible.
 With Jesus' continued presence in the gift of the Holy Spirit
 He will enable us to be effective witnesses
 Sharing the Gospel and making disciples,
 So that others may experience God's fellowship and love.

At McMaster University in Hamilton,
 student athletes and sisters Taylor and Cassidy Davis
 joined a small group who met regularly
 to read Scripture, pray, and support one another.
 Their faith grew in this community.

Over time, what they received began to flow outward.
They started encouraging teammates, sharing prayer,
and living openly about their faith in Christ.

They started off being discipled
But they graduated to becoming witnesses
Disciplers, to others in their own circle of influence.
They describe it as learning that faith is not separate from life,
but lived out through everyday relationships. [The value of authenticity | Navigators of Canada. (2024). Retrieved May 30, 2026, from Navigators.ca website: <https://navigators.ca/the-value-of-authenticity/>]

Lets pray.