

Holy Trinity, June 12, 2022 (Jo 16:12-15; Prov 8:1-4, 22-31; Ps 8; Ro 5:1-5)

When the Christian Church began 2000 years ago, almost everyone who “converted” to the new faith either had a personal experience of God, or was converted by someone who’d experienced God in a personal way.

As God’s “frozen chosen,” Lutherans today rarely talk about an encounter with God. We may have them, but if we tried sharing them, even with other Lutherans, they might think we’re “weird.”

But things were different for the early church, in the first 500 years after Christ’s resurrection. Followers of the new faith *wanted* to talk about the grandeur and glory of an all-powerful God who died on a cross for their sins.

As they listened to the newly-written scriptures, they heard about God who had created, and continued to sustain, all life. They heard about Jesus, the Son of this Creator God, who died for their sins.

And they heard about the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, sent by the Father to guide them in all things after Jesus ascended into heaven, where he is *seated at the right hand of the Father*.

You can’t look up “the holy Trinity” in the Bible. Theologians—people who talk about God—pulled that concept together to make sense of common religious experience. We use the results of their struggle when we confess our faith in the words of the Apostles Creed.

The early “church fathers,” as we call them (sorry, ladies), were looking for a simple way to teach the basic beliefs of the new-born church. The words we say today have changed over the centuries, but the origins go back as far as the third or fourth century.

The “baptism of the Holy Spirit” on the first Christian Pentecost added about 3000 people to the small group of the Lord’s faithful followers. It was that same Holy Spirit who became the leader and guide of the early church, as he **led believers into all truth**. All the “truth” that unites mainline Christians today is expressed in the words of the Apostles Creed.

It’s human nature to want to cling to what’s comfortable and familiar. Especially for something as personal as an issue of faith. Especially in our western culture, where faith, like almost everything else, has taken on such an individual meaning.

But the church in the western world has moved far from the origins and intentions of scriptures. The Bible was written over the course of hundreds of years, and it documents many changes in the ways people responded to God’s commands and mercies.

There are a lot of stories of individuals in both the Old and New Testaments. But in every story, the individual is part of a larger community—a community of faith. And in every story, it’s the *community* that receives God’s commands and mercies.

Biblical Christian faith isn’t individualistic. It begins in community through the sacrament of baptism. It’s nourished in community through worship and Christian education. It’s renewed whenever Christians receive the body and blood of Jesus, given and shed for the plural *you*.

The living body of Christ, the Church, looks a lot different today than it did 2000 years ago. It’s changed with the times, and with location. We can’t live or experience Christianity today in the United States the same way the early believers did in Jerusalem or Rome. There’s been too much change.

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But the basic ideas of our faith haven't changed, and never will: the undying, all-forgiving love of our Lord and Savior, Jesus. The Holy Trinity we confess in the Apostles Creed always has been, is now, and will be forever.

Thanks be to God!