

Rooted: The Trinity

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Preacher: Kent Dixon

- [0 : 0 0] Welcome here for this Sunday, September 24th, in case you were lost and didn't know what day it was. My name is Kent Dixon, and it's my joy to be the pastor here.
- Welcome to each of you this morning, whether you're here in person, it's so great to see smiling faces looking back at me and not just an empty room. Or if you're connecting, lots of people connect on the website or on a podcast list to sermons and things like that throughout the week or in the days ahead.
- So blessings on anyone, however they're connecting with us. So The Chosen has been going great. So if you have free time on Tuesday nights, come and join us.
- We are having a good time of conversation and exploring the stories of Jesus and his ministry and the stories of the Gospels in a whole new way and good conversation and time together.
- A few of us also went and volunteered at the food bank on Thursday night, and that was amazing. So we will do it again at some point, so just stay tuned. It was super enlightening for us to learn, well, and heartbreaking as well, to learn how many people use the services of the food bank.
- [1 : 1 2] The young lady who toured us through their building on Thursday evening, Wednesday evening, Wednesday, Thursday, it's all a blur. Let us know that in the three years since she's been volunteering there, the client number has gone from 17,000 per month to 35,000 per month, just in a few years.
- She said they're anticipating that number to increase as food availability, food costs and things like that get more and more challenging for folks.
- So you can pray for the ministry of the food bank. If you ever want to give to them, do it. I encourage it. Giving funds is a good way to do it because we were involved in sorting through a lot of the food that comes in, and it's a complicated process.
- So if you give to them financially, then they're able to channel those funds in a resource like that in a really easy way for them. So, yeah.
- So God bless you if you feel called to do that. So this morning we're continuing in our sermon series, Rooted. So over the coming weeks, we'll be, and we have been, considering some important concepts and truths that are essential for us as followers of Jesus.
- [2 : 3 4] Things that we need to remember and understand to remain rooted in our faith. Gravity. What just happened?
- Anyone? What just happened? Gravity. Yes. If you said sermon illustration, you got lots of points. Gravity, right?
- That's gravity at work. What you actually saw there was gravity. Well, you didn't see gravity itself, let's be honest. You saw it at work.
- You saw it in action. You witnessed right here what it does. It pulls things to the ground. So while we didn't see it, let me say it this way.

If I asked each of you to explain gravity, we'd probably get one, two, three, four, five, the same number of explanations as there are people in the sanctuary this morning.

[3 : 31] We might get similar themes, but we'd get a variation. But just because you can't see it or explain it clearly doesn't mean it doesn't exist.

Does that make sense? There's your sermon illustration connection. And we know gravity exists because we experience it in action all the time. So this morning in our third sermon in the Rooted series, we're going to talk about something that's a bit like gravity.

We're going to talk about the Trinity. And if you feel like, yikes, I didn't expect another heavy theological topic, it's going to be okay, I promise. So I can't fully summarize or explain the concept myself.

You may be thinking, but didn't you go to seminary? Shouldn't you have it all figured out? I've never really even read an explanation that explained it thoroughly or completely.

But we're going to try our best this morning. Okay, I promise. So early church theologian Augustine once said of the Trinity, try to deny the Trinity, you lose your soul.

[4 : 43] Try to understand the Trinity, you lose your mind. So that is a humorous explanation. It does make us laugh.

And I believe from many of the things that I've read of Augustine, he had a sense of humor. But that's reality, right? It's a concept that's very difficult to explain.

So like gravity, we can't see the Trinity. And we can't fully explain the Trinity. At least, as I said, I have yet to see a complete explanation that went, aha, there it is.

But we definitely know it exists. And why? Because we see it in the Bible over and over. And as we said in our first sermon in this series, when we talked about the Bible, Scripture is our best place to start as the source and foundation for God's truth about any concept.

So let's start by defining the Trinity. And I've used Wayne Grudem before. He's a theologian. And this is a great definition. So let's start by defining the Trinity. Grudem says there is one God who eternally exists.

[5 : 49] Back a slide. Sorry, Shelley. Yes, there is one God who eternally exists in three distinct persons who are fully and equally God. Got it?

Done. God bless you. Have a great week. So that's it. There's a definition of the Trinity. But let's break it down a bit. So first, there is one God.

And this God has always been and will always be. This one God is three persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. And these three persons are equal but distinct and at the same time one God.

So I'll get to these references in a second. So there is one God and the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are God. So now you get it, right?

Now we're good. It's getting worse. Is it getting worse? So now you can maybe also understand why Augustine thought this was crazy making, right?

[6 : 56] Let's go to the Bible and let's see. And this is what we're going to do this morning. Let's see what the Bible says about the Trinity to help us better understand the concept. First, there is, as this slide says, one God.

Deuteronomy 4, verse 35. And I'll read these references to you, but you have them if you want to look them up or note them for later. Deuteronomy 4, verse 35 says, To you it was shown that you might know that the Lord is God.

There is no other besides him. Deuteronomy 32, verse 39 says, See now that I, even I, am he. And there is no God beside me.

I kill and make alive. I wound and I heal. And there is none that can deliver out of my hand. Psalm 86, verse 10 says, For you are great and do wondrous things.

You alone are God. Isaiah 45, verse 5 says, I am the Lord and there is no other. Beside me there is no God.

[8 : 02] I equip you though you do not know me. 1 Timothy 1, 17 says, To the king of the ages, Immortal, invisible, the only God.

Be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen. Amen indeed. So we have clear declarations there from both the Old and New Testament that there is only one true God.

And I hope you can see that there. So more than that, if we declare the Bible to be our only source of truth, the Bible itself says that only the God of Christianity, the God who revealed himself in the Bible, only he is the true God.

And there may be other gods, the Bible says, but they are false. So hopefully that clarifies, and it's just the very beginning of our definition, that God, that definition of God of the Trinity, is a little bit more clear from those verses.

So here's the tricky part. Our definition also says there's one God who eternally exists in three distinct persons who are fully and equally God.

[9 : 20] Is that where you feel like your sanity is starting to slip? Because that's a hard concept for us to understand. So how can God be three persons?

One God, three persons. I don't know. There's your answer. I don't fully understand how that can be.

But as we talked about in our sermon last week, there are hidden things that God does not reveal to us. And I believe that is one of them. So now I'm really bad at math, as you've heard me say, but how can three persons be one thing?

Three, one plus one plus one is not one. So why do we stand so firmly on this? Why do we understand one God and three persons?

Why is that what we believe? Well, because the Bible tells us, and God is calling someone to tell them, he tells us over and over in the Bible.

[10 : 23] So let's look. First, or someone's playing the xylophone. First, the Father is God. We got that, right? So this should be a statement we can all obviously agree on.

John 6, verse 37 says, All that the Father gives me, Jesus says, will come to me, and whoever comes to me, I will never cast out.

So Jesus there is agreeing that the Father is God, and that God, the Father, was ultimately in control. First Corinthians 8, verse 6 says, Yet for us there is one God, the Father, for whom are all things, and for whom we exist.

And one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom all things, and through, sorry, through whom are all things, and through whom we exist.

So Paul is writing with conviction there that Christians should know that the Father is God. And he's saying it as a matter of fact, right? He's saying, well, you know this, I know this, and I'm just going to say it.

[11 : 36] So he's not revealing some great truth that his listeners would have said, wait, what? He would have said, you get it, and I get it. God the Father is God, and that's where the Bible starts.

So second, the Son, Jesus Christ, is God. Now don't let that huge list of references freak you out. I will read them for you. So some people may not be able to immediately get it that the Son is also God, but the Bible makes that clear as well.

So John 1, verses 1 and 2, you know this, in the beginning was the Word, capital W, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

He was in the beginning with God. John 1, verse 14 says, and the Word, capital W again, became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.

So the Word, capital W, is Jesus. We know that. Scripture says the Word was with God at the beginning. Jesus, the Son, was there at the beginning, but not standing next to him, with him, the Bible says.

[12 : 56] And that same Word, Jesus, became flesh, became human, and Scripture says dwelt among us as the Son. John 8, verse 58, Jesus said to them, truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am.

There's a two-word phrase. And this declaration of Jesus would have driven the religious leaders at the time crazy because that reference, those two words, Jesus was using them to declare that he himself was God.

So where have we heard those two words before? Exodus 3, verse 14, God said to Moses, I am who I am. And he said, say this to the people of Israel, I am has sent me to you.

John 20, verse 28, Thomas answered Jesus when he asked him, who do you say that I am? Thomas answered him, my Lord and my God.

Paul says in Romans 9, verse 5, to them belong the patriarchs, and from their race, according to the flesh, is the Christ, who is God over all, blessed forever.

[14 : 19] Amen. Titus chapter 2, verse 13, picks up kind of mid-thought. Waiting for our blessed hope, the appearance of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ.

Doesn't say God, comma, and Savior Jesus Christ. It's one entity. 1 John, chapter 5, verse 20, says, And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding, so that we may know him who is true.

And we are in him who is true, in his Son, Jesus Christ. He is the true God and eternal life. Do you see that over and over and over?

We can say that Jesus is God because the Bible, God's word, God's truth to us, says over and over that he is God, that Jesus is God.

Third, the Holy Spirit is God, person number three. The Holy Spirit, and you've heard me say this before over the years, Holy Spirit is not a magical, mysterious force.

[15 : 31] I think often as Christians we go, Father got it, Son, Jesus got it, yeah, he healed people, got all that. Holy Spirit, yeah, I'm going to put him here, I don't completely get him.

He is not the power of God. He is not God at work. You know, I think as Christians we tend to use those kinds of expressions. It's not correct.

The Holy Spirit is a person with characteristics. He's not an it. So how do I know that? Well, let's look at what the Bible says. Ephesians 4, verse 30 says, and do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.

The Holy Spirit clearly has emotional capability there and can be grieved. A mystical force cannot be grieved. To my knowledge, anyway.

Gravity can't be made sad. Acts 7, verse 51 says, you stiff-necked people, uncircumcised in your heart and ears, you always resist the Holy Spirit.

[16 : 42] As your fathers did, so do you. Do you hear that? The Holy Spirit can be resisted. So you could say, well, maybe a force can be resisted.

Not taken with the other things we're hearing. Hebrews 10, verse 29. How much worse punishment do you think will be deserved by the one who is trampled underfoot the Son of God and has profaned the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified and has outraged the Spirit of grace.

The Holy Spirit can be insulted. He can be angered. Those are qualities of a person. So those examples from Scripture, I believe, make it clear that the Holy Spirit is a person.

But then the Holy Spirit is also God. So let's look at that. 2 Corinthians 3, verses 17 and 18. Now the Lord is the Spirit and where the Spirit of the Lord is, you've heard this, there is freedom.

And we all with unveiled face beholding the glory of the Lord are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another.

[18 : 02] From this, for this, comes from the Lord who is Spirit. So it's stated boldly and clearly there, I think, that the Lord is the Spirit.

Acts 5, verses 3 and 4. Peter says, Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep back for yourself part of the proceeds of the land?

Ananias has sold some land and should have given some to the church and did not and lied about it. So while it remained unsold, Peter says, did it not remain your own?

After it was sold, was it not at your disposal? Why is it that you have contrived this deed in your heart? You have not lied to man, but to God.

So when Peter confronts Ananias about lying to the Holy Spirit, he makes it clear that he hasn't lied to some invisible force, right? He's saying not even that he's lied to another human being, but he's declaring that Ananias, by lying, has lied directly to God.

[19 : 14] So we say and believe the Holy Spirit is God because the Bible says he is. We're not making it up. We're going to the source.

So I think we've clarified from Scripture, hopefully, because that's a fairly exhaustive review, that God is three distinct persons and that each person is declared by Scripture to be God.

Would you agree with that? Is that fair? There are some mm-hmms and no snores. That's a good sign. So now let's quickly look at some times when the Trinity, Father, Son, and Spirit are together in Scripture.

And there's actually three times when that happens. Genesis 1, verses 1 and 2. Let's start right at the top. In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.

The earth was without form and void and darkness was over the face of the deep and the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.

[20 : 20] Spirit at creation. John 1, verses 1 and 2. We heard this. In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God.

He was in the beginning with God. Spirit, Son. All three persons were with God, were present at creation.

Genesis 1, verse 26. Then God said, Let us make man in our image after our likeness and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.

Genesis 3, verse 22 says, Then the Lord God said, Behold, the man has become like one of us in knowing good and evil.

Now, lest he reach out his hand and take also of the tree of life and eat and live forever. Do you hear the plural language there? The Lord said, Let us make man in our image.

[21 : 30] The Lord God said, Behold, the man has become like one of us in knowing good and evil. This is not a singular individual talking to the angels. This isn't God saying to the angels, They're starting to think they're like us.

This is God speaking in the plural. See that? God referencing members of the Trinity. Luke 4, verses 18 to 22, Jesus quotes Isaiah 61, verse 1, when he says, The Spirit of the Lord is upon me because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor.

He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.

Continuing in that passage, and he, Jesus, rolled up the scroll and gave it back to the attendant and sat down. And the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him.

And he began to say to them, Today, this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing. And all spoke well of him and marveled at the gracious words that were coming from his mouth.

[22 : 52] And they said, Is this not Joseph's son? Huh. So we see there that all three persons of the Trinity were active in these examples from the Bible.

All three of them were there. So it's important to note some critical errors. Now, I was going to talk about all the incomplete metaphors that people often use.

Trinity is like a candle. No, it's not. Trinity is like an egg. No, it's not. And why are those incomplete metaphors? Because a candle is not a flame. A candle is not a wick.

A candle is not the wax. An egg is not the shell or the yolk or the white. All of those three things need to come together to make the one.

And that's not the case with the Trinity. So it's also important to note some critical errors about, that happen when we deny the Trinity. And these are often known as heresies.

[23 : 53] Polytheism. So that's a belief in multiple gods or suggestions that somehow Jesus was a man who became a god. And so, hey, guess what?

We could become gods ourselves. Nope. Polytheism. Modalism. God is not three different persons, three distinct persons, but one person who has acted in different capacities throughout the Bible in history.

That's modalism. So that's suggesting that in the Old Testament maybe he was the father and then during the New Testament in the Gospels God became Jesus, just Jesus.

See that? Those are pieces of the whole rather than seeing the Trinity as a group. So that's the suggestion. God was the father in the Old Testament, the son Jesus in the New Testament and is the Holy Spirit now.

Also not correct, very fragmented. Arianism. Arianism suggests that the persons of the Trinity, father, son, and spirit, are not equal in some way.

[25 : 04] That Jesus was a created being whose role and position was a little lower than the father. So yeah, he's part of the Trinity but somehow not an equal.

Also wrong. So do you see how those perspectives are not correct and are not aligning with what we've looked at this morning? But people believe those things.

And I believe part of it is best of intentions trying to wrap your head around the crazy-making concept of the Trinity. But they're still not scriptural. So why is it important to believe the Trinity?

Why are we even having this conversation? I believe without understanding or seeking to understand the concept of the Trinity as the Bible lays it out, we can't truly know who God is.

The Trinity allows us to understand, have a deeper appreciation for who God is. If we don't see the Trinity, if we don't seek to understand its depth and breadth, the richness of all the relationship that's available to us there with those three persons of the Trinity is lost.

[26 : 15] The most important thing for us to know, to know God, and we can only truly know Him through the Trinity because we see those three persons who are all God.

So why else is it important to believe in the Trinity? It's so that we can know what love is. Human beings long for love, long for peace and companionship and community and connection.

And that longing, my friends, comes from being made in the image of God. That model, that longing in us, that model of the perfect relationship and community and companionship is only perfectly realized in the Trinity.

That's why we long for that, because we were created in the image of a perfect relationship. 1 John 4, verse 8 says, anyone who does not know God, does not love, does not know God, because God is love.

As we recognized at the end of our exploration of God's attributes last week, God is love. all of his other attributes fall within an understanding of his love, which is his ultimate nature.

[27 : 35] Within the Trinity, there is perfect love, perfect harmony, and unity, and peace, and community. In the Trinity, we see transparency. There's nothing hidden there.

we see humility. There's no jealousy or striving for attention or recognition. We see happiness amongst that group.

There's no sin or conflict or blaming or shaming. There's none of that. Matthew 23, verses 37 to 39, says, And he said to him, You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.

This is the great and first commandment. And the second is like it. You shall love your neighbor as yourself. We are called to, created to, love God and love others.

And the perfect model of love is on display in the Trinity. We also see the greatest example of the love of God on display in the Son, Jesus Christ.

[28 : 49] John 3, 16 says, For God so loved the world, God so loves the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish, but have eternal life.

John 15, 13 says, greater love has no one than this, that someone laid down his life for his friends.

My brothers and sisters, through Jesus, God gave himself to you. When you declared your allegiance to Jesus and dedicated your life to follow him as his disciple, the Holy Spirit came to live in you.

And God the Father watches over you and has a plan, not only for all creation, but specifically for you and for your life.

The Trinity. Christianity can actually be summed up with it. we come to the Father through the Son by the Spirit.

[30 : 06] My friends, my hope and prayer is that a more rich understanding of the nature of the Trinity, the Father, Son, and Spirit will draw you into a deeper relationship with God and that you'll be prompted more and more to share your love for your amazing God with your family, your friends, and your neighbors who may so deeply need him right now.

Our sending song will also be our benediction. So let's sing that over one another now as we go.