

An Introduction to the Trinity

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Preacher: Rev. George Sinclair

[0 : 00] Father, we want to be humble before your word. Father, humble us so that we can listen to your word. Humble us, Father, still our preconceptions and the limits we want to put on your word.

Father, at the same time, humble us in such a way that we still desire to use the very best of our mind to hear and to understand your word. And we ask, Father, that your word would be so read and heard by us that it will enter deeply into our lives, into the center of who we are, and that we would then, in our day-to-day lives, bear much fruit that brings you great glory.

And this we ask in Jesus' name, your Son and our Savior. Amen. Please be seated. I don't know how many people read the blog that I write every week.

It's in the bulletin. This isn't a plug for it or anything, but I make mention to something that happened to me when I was in university. There were several times in university that I almost lost my faith. And I record just very briefly one of the incidents that actually took place over several months where I almost lost my faith. I was familiar with the idea that Jehovah Witnesses didn't believe that Jesus was God and they didn't believe in the Trinity.

[1 : 24] But I'd never come across somebody who seemed to know the Bible quite well and who wasn't a Jehovah Witness and who claimed that the Trinity isn't taught in the Bible and that the Bible doesn't teach and Jesus didn't claim that he was God.

And this caught me by surprise. And at first I just completely and utterly, I didn't know, I didn't know actually that the word Trinity never is found in the Bible. And I denied it.

And that's actually a really bad start to a type of a long-time argument or discussion, that I deny something and it turns out they're right. And one of the problems I had is that when I started to look into the Bible to see where it taught about the Trinity, in particular in Jesus being God as well, the texts that I could come across, they didn't seem to teach what I thought they would teach.

They seemed really weak. And it was sort of a bit of a dark time for me because I thought maybe I was wrong about this. And it would, for me, I mean, I would have probably stopped being a Christian, actually, if I'd come to that conclusion.

And so we're going to look at a text today that talks about the Trinity. And it would be a great help to me if you would open your Bibles to John chapter 3. And in some ways, I don't know if this was one of the texts that I would have looked at all those years ago, a long time ago now when I was in university.

[2 : 50] I don't know if this would have been one of the texts, but it actually is a really good text to illustrate some of the problems that people have when they go to the Bible to find proof for the Trinity. And one of the things, you might not know this, so I'm going to tell you this right now.

This is actually Trinity Sunday in the ancient church year. And this is the text appointed to be read if you're doing a communion service on Trinity Sunday.

And the interesting thing about it is that this text, as a reading, goes back to the early 400s.

And the early Christians, they were increasingly having to deal with people who were illiterate. And even those who could read, before the invention of the printing press, people wouldn't have Bibles. So the early Christians tried to think through what Bible passages would be read on a Sunday when people came to church that would be read every year so that people would have a basic knowledge and understanding of the important things in the Bible.

[4 : 02] You think about it, if you had to go into an area that was illiterate, and even if they could read, they didn't have books, you might want to think of something like that as well. It's a very interesting missiological question.

Sorry, I like to use big words occasionally. So one of the things which puzzled me as I look at this text is it wouldn't normally be a text that I would teach on if I wanted to try to teach about the Trinity.

In fact, usually I would jump around to a lot of different texts. But we're just going to sit with this text for about half an hour and just look at it. Because this, for 1600 years, this would be one of the texts that people would go to if they want to talk about the Trinity.

That's sort of interesting in and of itself, isn't it? And so let's look at it. John chapter 3. But actually, before we read John chapter 3, we're going to start actually in chapter 2, verse 23.

And this is very important. This is a, I have to be careful. I can have lots of asides in a sermon. But this is an important aside. One of the standard problems that Christians have when they read the Bible is that they forget that the Bible is made up of books.

[5 : 06] So John is a book. John sat down and read it. He began it, verse 1, and he kept writing until he came to the end. And we tend to take pieces of the Bible as if they're just quotes.

You know, as if you go to a book of quotations or a web page of quotations, where it doesn't really matter what quote you read. But the Bible isn't written as a book of quotes. It's written as a book. And if you've ever read John's Gospel, you'll know that Jesus is infuriating in John's Gospel. Because all the way through John's Gospel, somebody will say to Jesus, here's my question, here's my problem.

And then the very, very next thing you know is that Jesus is talking about something completely and utterly different. And it often doesn't seem to make very much sense when you're reading John's Gospel.

Well, if you've been wondering that in your personal devotions, I've now said it out loud. It often doesn't seem to make any sense. And the reason it doesn't make any sense is because we've forgotten that it's a book.

[6 : 04] And what John does here at the end of chapter 2, he gives us, in a sense, a reading key for the rest of the book. So let's just read it. And then you'll see what I mean.

Now, when Jesus was in Jerusalem, this is chapter 2, verse 23. When Jesus was in Jerusalem at the Passover feast, many believed in his name when they saw the signs that he was doing.

But Jesus, on his part, did not entrust himself to them because he knew all people and needed no one to bear witness about man. For he himself knew what was in man.

Now there was a man of the Pharisees. Now, just pause here. What this text is saying is that you're going to now read, John, in a sense, is saying you're going to read a whole, I'm going to give you now a whole pile of stories about Jesus.

And what you have to understand in all of these stories is that Jesus understands what's actually going on in a human being. And so what you're going to see is that people will come to Jesus and they think they know what's going on in their lives.

[7 : 09] Or at least they want to present a particular picture of themselves to Jesus and they say something. But Jesus doesn't answer their mere words. He deals with their heart.

Okay? It's just as if maybe you have a, you know, in a couple of years, young Everett will come to the parents. And he might want to be saying this. But if the parents are wise, they might understand that actually Everett, you know, maybe he's worried that he, I don't know, painted all over the wall. Or, you know, crayoned all over the wall or something. And Everett's not really asking or trying to do what he seems to be wanting to do. He's actually, in a sense, trying to deal with this other thing that's going on in his life.

And a wise parent will try to read beneath the words or behind the words to see what's going on in the heart. Obviously very hard for us human beings to do. So all the way through the Gospel of John, that's what Jesus is going to do.

He's going to address the heart issue, not the words, per se. He goes underneath the words to the heart. So let's see how this works out with Nicodemus. And by the way, Nicodemus is a Canadian.

[8 : 17] Eh? You'll see it in a moment. I mean, technically, he's not really a Canadian. But what you see here is you see here represented a perfect Canadian. It goes here, chapter 3, verse 1.

Now, there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. This man came to Jesus by night and said to him, Rabbi, or that could also be translated as teacher, we know that you are a teacher come from God, for no one can do these signs that you do unless God is with him.

Now, just pause. Why is he a Canadian? Well, first, because, you know, if you were to say what Nicodemus just said, is that Jesus is a teacher come from God, you could say that in the editorial room of the Ottawa Citizen or the National Post or the Globe and Mail.

You could say it on CBC Radio. You could say it at University of Ottawa on the philosophy faculty or the religion faculty, and nobody would raise their eyes at it. Yeah, Jesus is a teacher come from God.

There's been lots of teachers come from God. And from an anthropological and sociological point of view, we're now on very, very familiar territory. We can have a conversation about teachers who come from God.

[9 : 24] It's a very Canadian understanding of who Jesus is. And so it's very, very interesting that this Canadian is here. And why specifically is it Canadian? Because he comes to Jesus at night when nobody will know that he wants to talk to him.

Because it doesn't bear to be too hung up about Jesus or too preoccupied about Jesus in public. Like, people might get worried that you're one of those fundamentalist types. So Nicodemus, he wants to talk to Jesus.

He comes at night when nobody can see him. And he begins, Nicodemus, like in modern cultural context, Nicodemus would be like a person who has their PhD in philosophy, also have their PhD in theology.

They're also a lawyer. And they're also in the cabinet of the province of Ontario. And they also happen to be very wealthy. Like, would be Nicodemus all rolled into one. And so Nicodemus is a member of the elite.

He's very, very well educated. He comes to Jesus and says, I want to talk about prophets who come from God. I want to talk about teachers who teach about God with you, Jesus. Let's talk about that.

[10 : 27] So how does Jesus respond to this? From a Canadian point of view, a very reasonable thing to want to talk about. How does Jesus respond? Look at verse 3. We're going to be, and this is what's so frustrating about Jesus for a lot of us.

He talks like he's a hick from the Appalachian Mountains. One of those religious whack jobs. That's a bit frightening for us sophisticated Canadian Christians to understand that Jesus talks like he's going to one of those weird, fundamentalist whack jobs.

That in and of itself is a disturbing notion to a lot of contemporary Christians in Canada. Here's how Jesus answers this very reasonable discussion about teachers who teach about God.

He says, verse 3, Truly, truly, verily, verily, amen, amen, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.

And some of your Bibles probably have a little note. The words that have been translated in English as born again can also equally be translated as born from above. Equally valid way of translating the word.

[11 : 39] And so Jesus completely and utterly comes at this from a very, very, very different way. Now I want to pause here just for a second. And if Andrew, you could put up the first point.

God is not a mere object for our minds to play with. God is not a mere object for our minds to play with.

This is going to be one of the powerful themes throughout this. And in fact, remember I shared with you that when I started looking into texts, back in university, trying to find out whether the Bible taught the Trinity, if I'm honest, what was going on in my mind is that I was treating the topic of God as if he was an object for my mind to play with.

And I was looking for words suitable to my way of arguing and my way of thinking. And when I didn't see them, I was disappointed.

I wanted God to have written a part of the Bible that said the Trinity, you know, and then have, you know, 43 points or seven points you need to know about the Trinity and have it all very nicely logically laid out so I could win the argument against this person.

[12 : 56] In other words, I wanted to treat this topic as if God was an object that my mind could play with. Now just, if you think about this for a second, the Bible teaches that God is a person, imagine for a moment that my wife was in here and she was sitting in that seat and I was to spend the next 20 minutes talking about my wife as if she was an object for my mind to play with, trying to discuss the pros and cons of her character, the nature of who she is, her looks, etc.

That would not go over very well. In fact, that would not go over well for me for the next several decades of my life, actually, if I was to treat my wife as an object for my mind to play with.

Yet that's what we want to do with God. And so Jesus is going to try to knock that desire out from under us.

So this guy wants to just talk about teachers who talk about God and Jesus says, you need to be born again, you need to be born from above. Now Nicodemus responds with a *reductio ad absurdum* argument.

I mean, he's well educated. He knows how to have these debates. In fact, he might even think, oh, Jesus is doing a very interesting opening move. Well, I'm going to defeat him. So Nicodemus says to Jesus, verse four, how can a man be born when he is old?

[14:19] Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born? Nicodemus takes one of the two senses, born again or born above. And if this was being done on TV, there'd be a convenient little gong right here.

And after Nicodemus has said this to Jesus, he would have picked up the thing and gone, gong, got ya. Big smile, sit down, waiting for Jesus to come back because he's made such a good response, *reductio ad absurdum*.

And Jesus keeps going after the heart. Here's how Jesus talks. And the words in my version, truly, truly, if you use the King James version, it's verily, verily.

I have to say verily, verily. That sounds so much neater than truly, truly. It could also be translated as amen, amen. Verse five, Jesus answered, truly, truly, verily, verily, amen, amen.

I say to you, unless one is born of water and the spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh and that which is born of the spirit is spirit. Do not marvel that I said to you, you must be born again or you must be born from above.

[15:25] The wind blows where it wishes and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the spirit. Now, this is a very odd way for Jesus to answer.

And if you go and look at academic commentaries, there's been piles of trees killed and ink spilled on this particular topic because in a very, very interesting way, a lot of modern commentators want to make it look as if Jesus is talking about something called baptismal regeneration.

That if you baptize somebody with water, they're automatically saved. And that's not what this text is talking about at all. Jesus is Jewish. John is Jewish.

Jesus is talking to a Jewish scholar. And Jesus, in a sense, points to two passages, more than two passages in what we call the Old Testament, what the Jewish people call the Tanakh.

If you look in the bulletin, you'll see that I give the text in Isaiah and Ezekiel. And that's what Jesus does. And Nicodemus, who would have known the Old Testament, at least the words, he might not have understood the significance of it, but he understood, he would have remembered the words.

[16:36] And he would have known that those are very significant texts because those are texts where God says, you human beings, you do not have living hearts.

You inside of you and in your heart, in the Old Testament, that's the command center of the individual. It's not the seat of the emotions. It's the command center of the person. It's the command center that directs the will, that directs the mind, that directs the affections or the heart and the emotions.

And he says, God says, your heart is a dead stone. That's what you have at the command center of who you are, a stone which is dead.

And you need me to work with water in the spirit to give you a heart of flesh, a living heart. And I will do this.

A time will come. And he uses this double imagery of water in the spirit, of cleansing, of life in a desert type of area, the idea of water and life and the spirit.

[17:43] And that's the image that he uses in Isaiah and Ezekiel. In fact, Andrew, if you could put up this next point. By nature, I have a heart of dead stone. By grace, God will give me a new and living heart.

And in Isaiah and Ezekiel, it's God that will do this. God will do something with water and spirit, water and breath. God will do something because the human problem is that we have hearts that are dead, that are stones.

And we weren't made by God to have such hearts. We were made to have a command center that was alive and was open to God. And stones can't turn into life.

It doesn't matter if you have a tiny stone or a big stone. It doesn't matter if you put all sorts of stones together. You can make stones as stony as you want. They just say stones. They don't come alive. God has to do a miracle to turn a heart of stone into a living heart.

And that's what the Bible says that God is going to do. And Jesus, in a sense, is referring to it. And he's going to, in a sense, as the conversation goes on, says, is in effect saying that his presence there is the means by which God is going to do it.

[19 : 02] So Nicodemus, in verse 9, here's another thing about reading the Bible. When you read narratives or conversations, a lot of time, it will come to a fork in the road.

And you can ask yourself, when you're reading a narrative or something like this, a conversation, you can ask yourself, this conversation can go in one of two ways. Will Nicodemus continue to sort of act like he is the member of the elite, the faculty, you know, part of the philosophy faculty of the University of Toronto, part of the law faculty of the University of Toronto, the cabinet of the province of Ontario, who sits on the board of very important companies, who's just talking to this mere itinerant Jewish religious teacher, who obviously is trying to undercut him in making Old Testament references.

And will Nicodemus act like a member of the elite? Or will he say, I need to know what you're saying. And in the narratives in the Bible, sometimes a fork towards life is taken and sometimes a fork towards death is taken.

What fork does Nicodemus take? He takes the fork towards life. And in verse 9, he says, how can these things be? How can these things be?

And Jesus in verse 10 answers, are you the teacher of Israel and yet you do not understand these things? In other words, he knows the words.

[20 : 34] He's picked up the reference to Isaiah and Ezekiel. He knows the words. He doesn't understand what it's going to look like, how on earth it could possibly work, how on earth it could possibly be something that Jesus knows something about.

He doesn't know these things. In other words, one of the things is that people, he's seen some of the miracles that Jesus has seen, but he hasn't understood the miracles.

He doesn't understand that the miracles aren't just a mere display of power, that they're actually, in every case, like a sign that's pointing to something. And he's merely just seen the fact that miracles have happened, but he hasn't asked himself a question as to where the signs point to and what God is trying to communicate to him through these signs.

And so Jesus continues, Are you the teacher of Israel and yet you do not understand these things? That's verse 10. Verse 11, Truly, truly, verily, verily, I say to you, we speak of what we know and bear witness to what we have seen, but you do not receive our testimony.

If I have told you earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you heavenly things? No one has ascended into heaven except he who descended from heaven, the Son of Man.

[21 : 49] And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.

So, here's what Jesus is doing in this conversation. Andrew, if you could put up the next point.

Nicodemus has come wanting to discuss the sociological and anthropological phenomenon phenomenon of teachers who teach about God.

He, in a sense, is maybe trying to pay Jesus a compliment that even though Jesus doesn't have a PhD from Cambridge and a PhD from Oxford and a PhD from the Sorbonne and that he's not really rich and he didn't attend the right schools when he was a kid, he's still a pretty smart guy.

And Jesus is trying to bring Nicodemus to the point where he realizes, and I'm putting it, because if you're writing this as your own notes for yourself, that's how I put it this way, I am not in a position to merely consider different ways to ascend to God.

I am not in a position to merely consider different ways to ascend to God. And it's been the constant human desire to figure out a way to ascend to God.

[23 : 08] Some of us want to assist, you know, human beings will talk about ascending to God through developing fine aesthetic sensibilities. Some of it will be by, in a sense, as if your wealth will make you somehow more God-like.

Some of it will be through unbelievable physical mastery. Some of us, it will be through mysticism. Some of us, it will be through rationalism. Some of us, it will be through science and technology.

Some of us, it will be through science, finding out some principle or some equation that explains everything. Some of us, it will be through sacrifices or religious activities or mystical experiences or all of these types of things.

And Jesus says, no one can ascend to God. You're talking about ascending to God and you're stuck with a stone where there should be, as your command center, where there should be something alive.

And this goes beyond the text. If you read the rest of, I don't have time to do it if you read Pastor John 3.16, but Andrew, if you could put up the next point. Jesus is also going to make the point with Nicodemus that human beings are tragically addicted to hiding from the living God.

[24 : 19] And I put it down, because I want, if I'm reading the notes, I don't want to say, my wife is tragically addicted to hiding from the living God or my kids are, or those Muslims or the gays or the transgendered or the rich or the people who vote liberal or, because that's what we can do.

That's why I always put down I, often in my points, right? Because I want you to write it down if you want to write it down and it's, you're speaking about yourself. I am tragically addicted to hiding from the living God.

I mean, just think about it for a second. One of the reasons it can take a lifetime to get to know another person is because we as persons hide from each other. I mean, a husband and a wife, even husbands and wives who've been married for many years, there's things they hide about themselves from the other person.

And if we do that to a person that we're married to that we see, imagine how much that reveals about our own tendency to try to hide from God. And so here I am, this is what Jesus is going to talk about verses 17 on, the continuation of the conversation I'm just trying to give you.

So here, here, Nicodemus is thinking he can discuss all these complicated things but he hasn't looked at his heart. He hasn't realized his heart is dead. He doesn't realize that he can't ascend to God, that that's not at all what his position is.

[25 : 46] And he doesn't even understand that his fundamental problem isn't ascending to God but the fact that he's addicted to hiding from God. In fact, one of the ways to understand the book of John is that one of the things which has troubled many people is the way that John keeps referring to the Jews.

And what you have to understand about the book of John when you read it is that John, basically, there's lots of symbolism in it. And John is Jewish, he's not anti-Jewish, Jesus is Jewish, he's not anti-Jewish, and Jesus isn't anti-Jewish.

And John's gospel is constantly filled with Old Testament references that he uses to show that Jesus is what the whole Bible is talking about. when he uses the word the Jews, it's a symbol for human beings using religion to hide from God.

Human beings using spirituality as a way to hide from God, the true and living God. And that, whenever you see Jews, see human beings organized in their religion and spirituality to hide from God.

that's what he means. That's how we make it so that we can understand how it's easy for us to develop church services that are all about an emotional experience, that are all about an aesthetic experience, are all about an intellectual experience, that are all about maybe having some insight about how to get a promotion or how to have a better marriage.

[27 : 21] But they're all just examples of moralism and therapy with a distant God. So, it's talking about Nicodemus is one of us.

And, and so, so Jesus is going to say here then that no one has ascended into heaven, verse 13, except he who descended from heaven, the Son of Man.

And then in verse 14, excuse me, then in verse 14, he says, and as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.

And what he's, and you can look in your bulletins, it's in the Growing in Grace. I give you the different, I know it's going deeper, I give you the different references here. It's a story from the book of Numbers, Numbers chapter 21.

And the Jewish people are in the wilderness, they're under God's judgment because they didn't want to enter the promised land, they turned back, and now they're under another particular aspect of God's judgment, and as part of God's judgment for their complete and utter disbelief, he sends serpents as a means of his judgment, and these serpents, when they bite, it's like an infestation of

serpents, that when they bite, they're going to bring death.

[28 : 45] And they call out to God for deliverance. And so God says to Moses, I will deliver my people, I want you to take a pole, and I want you to put the pole in the center of the camp, and I want you to make an image of the serpent, which is my judgment.

I want to have my judgment, in a sense, symbolized as a serpent, and I want you to put it on the pole, like this. And I want you to put the serpent, my means of judgment, and your need to be judged, and your need for deliverance, and I want you to put it on a pole, and in the ancient Hebrew, the serpent would have been red, the color of atonement, the color of blood.

And I want you to put it on the pole in the center of the camp. And anybody who looks at that serpent that's been lifted up and put in the center of the camp on a pole, and anybody who looks to it, they won't die from the serpent's bite.

They'll be delivered. And Jesus is saying to Nicodemus, you come to me thinking that you can discuss religious anthropology and religious sociology and competing theories of teachers from God.

You don't realize that you have a heart of stone. You don't realize that you can't ascend to heaven. You don't realize that your fundamental problem is that you're hiding from God. You don't realize that you can't fix it.

[30 : 09] You want to ascend? No. You need God himself to descend and then to be lifted up on a cross so that those who look and put their trust that that will save them, that they will be saved.

And then in John, the next verse, could you actually, I put it down at the end, Andrew, can you fast forward and put John 3.16 up on the screen, please? Could you all say this with me? For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only son that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

Can you read that with me again? It's, you know what, no religion has a verse like this. No spirituality says something as profound as this. For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only son that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

We want to have a debate about God and a debate about how to ascend. God knows that what we need is a savior and that's what he provides in the person of his son.

Now just before we go back to this, just in closing, some of you might be saying, George, I thought this was a Trinity sermon. But you see, this is why the ancients were so smart because they know that what we want is to treat God like an object that we can have mind games about.

[31 : 55] But they weren't dumb. This text actually perfectly models how you start to get to know the Trinity. Now just, the first thing about it is that we human beings, Andrew, if you could put up that, I think it's the fifth point.

When it comes to God, we humans love flat earth thinking. When it comes to God, we humans love flat earth thinking. I was going to try to come up, I was going to have a whole list of things.

I realize I have to be careful with time in this service. You know what just really blows your mind?

So when I was coming here this morning on the Queensway and I took a corner a bit fast and as I took the corner a bit fast, you could feel, I could feel my briefcase and my other stuff shifting a little bit, right?

Because when you're moving fast and things, and you turn a corner, things, you know, sort of move. Do you realize that right now while we're sitting here feeling very, very secure, the planet is turning at 1600 kilometers an hour?

1600 kilometers an hour. One hour from now, even if you've just sat on your chair, an hour, this afternoon, if you spend an hour watching TV, you've moved 1600 kilometers in a circle.

[33 : 14] You want something else which is really, really crazy? That's just, we're going like this, 1600 kilometers an hour. That's how fast we're turning around the axis. You know how fast we are moving through space?

Every second, the Earth moves 30 kilometers. Every second, we go from here to Carlton Place. Every second. But we don't feel anything. We just feel very secure. We're in one place. It's really counterintuitive to think that we're on the outside of a planet the outside of a planet that's spinning at 1600 kilometers an hour while moving through space at 30 kilometers a second.

And I can well understand how many people for a long time had a hard time believing that this could possibly be true. And, you know, if you want to talk to some of the people who are in sciences here in the church, and try to talk about the nature of light, try to talk about quantum things and quantum

particles, if you want it, like to understand that human beings, it seems so solid. In fact, most of us is empty space because of the way atoms and all work and that we're made up of things that are spinning around each other.

[34 : 42] Like, isn't that just unbelievably, like reality, is weird. And yet, when it comes to God, we want flatter thinking.

Andrew, if you could put up the next point, please. The truth about God as Trinity, how are we doing? Not that bad. The truth about God as Trinity develops from precise, prayerful, careful thinking on the data of Scripture.

So, just very briefly, this text. The Old Testament reference, what does it very clearly say? God, only God can make you born again or make you have this new heart.

Only God can do it. And at the same time, Jesus says that it's going to be the Holy Spirit that does it. And at the same time, he says that being born above, that's going to be something that God does.

And at the same time, Jesus says that when he goes up on the cross, he's going to be the means by which you have eternal life. Well, one moment, God is going to do it. The Holy Spirit is going to do it.

[35 : 48] Jesus is going to do it. And at the same time, it's very clear that within the text that they're all different. When Jesus says that he's descended from heaven, he doesn't mean that he's come from something like something emotional.

Heaven, for a Jewish person, is being right with God. It's being like in a sense, standing right, just like I'm standing just like with Brian. Well, I could have Brian come and stand right here beside me and if I'm with Brian, I'm in, that's the same image.

You're in God's presence. And Jesus says he leaves God's presence. So God is, he's left God's presence. So one moment, Jesus is different than God.

Jesus has left God's presence. God is going to have to be the one to save us. God is the one who makes us born from above. The Holy Spirit is the one who makes us born again. Jesus is the one who gives us eternal life.

And the thinking about the Trinity emerged from careful, prayerful reading of the data. And just as with any human being, any person, we reveal ourselves in bits and pieces.

[36 : 56] And for me to know the mystery of my wife and for her to know the mystery of me is revealed over time in many, many different ways by things we say and the way we carry ourselves and how we sit and how we eat and how we do this.

And the mystery of the person is revealed from all of this. So it is that the doctrine of the Trinity is found in the Bible. Jesus, God doesn't write an Athanasian creed.

He doesn't write a book of systematic theology. He reveals himself in such a way that our hearts are revealed, that we have hearts of stone. Andrew, could you put up John 3.16 again?

Could you all read this with me again? Actually, before we read it, you know what is so wonderful about this text? You can be very poor and go to heaven.

You can be mentally challenged and go to heaven. You don't have to have a university degree. You don't have to be rich. You don't have to be married. You don't have to be single.

[37 : 58] You don't have to have a perfect sexuality. You don't have to be famous on the planet. You don't have to have athletic prowess. None of these things which matter to human beings do you have to have to be made right with God.

There's only one thing. You must be born again. And there is no one so far from God that Jesus isn't sufficient to make them right, to make you right with him.

And there is no one so successful or so much of a failure that you don't need to be born again. And God does this in the words of John 3.16.

Could you read it with me, please, out loud? For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

There's the gospel. It's one of the greatest verses. Buddhism doesn't have it. Islam doesn't have it. Hinduism doesn't have it. Atheism and agnosticism doesn't have it.

[39 : 06] In fact, I'm going to talk about this more in another sermon. Here's the incoherence and the great aching need that modern people have but don't entirely, can't articulate it.

Human beings descend from apes, therefore love one another. That doesn't make any sense. Human beings descend from apes, therefore love one another.

Human beings have this great sense of their need for love. And only the scriptures, only a brilliant text like John 3.16 explains our great need for love and our great longing for it and that God so loved the world that he gave his one and only son that whoever believes in him shall not perish because we have hearts of stone but shall have eternal life.

God will give a heart, a living heart. Let's just stand, please. I want to urge you that if you have never given your life to Jesus, there is no better time than today to just, you know, I'm not going to lead you in a sinner's prayer or anything like that.

If the Holy Spirit is convicting you that you need, just say, John, just say, Father, God, I have a heart, I have a heart of stone. I want what George just talked about.

[40 : 39] John 3.16, I believe it. I can't even know if I remember all the words but God, what that talked about, I want that to be for me. And use your own words and call out to God and there is no better time than today to do it.

No better time than right now. What's stopping you from doing it right now? Let's just bow our heads in prayer. Father, thank you so much that you are our creator.

Thank you so much that you are our sustainer. Thank you so much, Father, that you made us to be in a relationship with you. Thank you, Father, so much that when you saw that we desire to be like God, when we, in a sense, killed the command center of our lives and turned the command center of our lives rather than being something connected to you into being a heart of stone.

Thank you, Father, that you saw our desperate need and seeing our desperate need. You loved us and sent your son to die upon the cross to be the one by whom you can make us right with yourself. Thank you, Father, that he took our judgment upon himself. He took our doom. He took our sickness. He took our alienation. And he offered us his life, his health, his strength, his destiny, his place for you, with you.

[42 : 01] Father, thank you for this profound act of love and substitution and exchange. Father, make us disciples of Jesus who are gripped by this gospel, who are learning to live for your glory.

Father, make us disciples of Jesus gripped by the gospel, learning to live for your glory. And this we ask in Jesus' name. Amen.