

# Trinity XXIII

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[ 0 : 00 ] The essence of the Christian faith is to trust in God, to put our faith in God. We are not to put our trust in anything other than the Lord.

When we say in the creed, which is just what we just said in the Nicene Creed, I believe in God, that is a statement of allegiance. For the baptized Christian living a life of surrender to the Lord.

We believe in God and we are to worship him in all things. That's what it means to be Christian.

This means that we are not to place our confidence in other people because at some point they will always fail us.

We are not to put our faith in governments. Or the endless chatter of politicians because their promises will always fall short. And most importantly, especially in our culture, we need to hear this. Most importantly, we are not to put our faith in ourselves. In our own abilities. Because we are often blinded to our own sin.

[ 1 : 21 ] Our own shortcomings. We are not to think that we are superior or more insightful than others. And this should become apparent as we take inventory of our own lives.

And we see how many of our decisions are biased. Always putting self as the center of all thoughts and actions.

The well-known newspaper cartoonist Walt Kelly created that character called Pogo.

That captured this truth quite well when the little possum said, We have met the enemy. And the enemy is us. As we heard from our Old Testament reading this morning, Israel was in a state of ruin.

Isaiah chapter 64 describes the aftermath of a nation that had been overrun by the Babylonians due to the fact that they had turned away from the Lord.

[ 2 : 28 ] Trusting in themselves. And then spiraling into wickedness. In verses 7 and 8 of Isaiah chapter 64, we read the prophet lamenting.

As Isaiah says, And there was no one who calls on your name. Who stirs himself up to take hold of you. For you have hidden your face from us.

And have consumed us because of our iniquities. But now, O Lord, you are our Father. We are the clay.

And you are the potter. And we are the work of your hand. The first step towards communion with God, a restored fellowship with God, is admitting our pride.

And seeking to put our faith in God. Not in ourselves. Not in governments. Not in anyone or anything. Only the creator and Lord over all is our hope.

[ 3 : 34 ] And he alone is the one that deserves our worship. And this lays the groundwork for our gospel reading this morning. Our Lord encounters the most unlikely alliance of men who seek his downfall.

Here in Matthew chapter 22. We read about the Pharisees on the one hand, who believed that the law of God should dictate every aspect of Jewish society.

The Pharisees rejected any government, any institution that was outside the law of God. And they, being the experts of the law, thought themselves as the real rulers of the Jewish people.

On the other hand, they team up with the Herodians. These were zealous followers of that puppet king, Herod.

Herod was a puppet ruler of the Roman Empire installed to keep the Jewish people in line with Caesar. So that they would not rebel.

[ 4 : 44 ] That they would not go against the Pax Romana, the peace of Rome. And the question that both sides ask is whether people should pay taxes to Caesar.

The Herodians are obviously wanting to see if Jesus would go against the Roman Emperor. And the Pharisees, well, they want to see if Jesus would side with the Herodians and prove his disloyalty to the Jewish people and to the law of God.

That was the trap. Our Lord answers the question by saying, Give to Caesar what is Caesar's. Meaning, pay the taxes owed to the Roman government.

But then he says something even more profound when he says, Give to God what is God's. In other words, we are to live as peaceful citizens in the world, as long as it does not mean violating our ultimate allegiance to God.

Our governments can levy taxes. We may not like it. But we are to give to what the government requires of us.

[ 6 : 07 ] But giving to the Lord is much more than mere money. We are to give to God what is God's.

What does that mean? Well, it means that we are to live total dependence upon God. Our lives are to be dependent upon God.

Our faith, our allegiance is to God alone. As Isaiah reminds us this morning, we are to recognize that he is the potter.

He is the one that formed and fashions us, and we are the clay. We are to give to God all that we have and all that we are. Another way of saying this is that we are to worship God alone.

We are not to put our faith in anything or anyone, and we are not to place our confidence, our trust, in ourselves.

[ 7 : 08 ] There is much anxiety in the world today. We see it all around. We see it with what's happening in the Middle East.

Governments threatening war with one another. Nothing new. It's just right now its forefront every day of our lives. This past week, we just heard of the population decrease in this country, where they talk about the devastating effects on the workforce and the future care for the elderly.

We are bombarded with stories related to corruption and ineptitude by our governing officials. Seems like every day we're hearing that.

There is more than enough evidence for people to see the futility of putting their confidence in political, educational, or national entities.

But everyone has a part to play in this mess. We all do. As that little possum Pogo said so well, we have met the enemy, and that enemy is us.

[ 8 : 20 ] We are all susceptible to elevating ourselves, thinking that we are the smartest people on the planet. We are all susceptible of elevating ourselves, motivated by pride.

And we do this more than we would ever care to admit. We might not say things out loud, but oftentimes, that is our attitude. Friends, our calling is to see such selfishness in ourselves and to live lives of repentance.

And after we repent, we are then called to return to our Lord God. And our Lord is the one whose desire is always to have mercy, to bring us back, to have fellowship with us.

This desire is so great that our God took upon human flesh and became man. And then he gave his own life for us upon the cross.

And in return, he gives us hope, he gives us peace, even in life's most perplexing times.

[ 9 : 46 ] And we receive this life, we receive this hope through the sacraments, his gifts to us. And then we are called to live lives of faith and allegiance to Jesus Christ, who is our Lord and our King.

Amen. In the name of the Father and of the Son of the Holy Ghost. Amen.