

Doctrine

The Father

Fairview Missionary Church | Angola, IN

Scripture: Assorted

Speaker: Joel Greenwood

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Last week, Pastor Sam introduced us to a new series that we are going to be walking through as a church, and the series is called "Doctrine." And if you don't like it, just know that this was Pastor Sam's idea. All right? I'm just kidding. We both felt that this was an important topic for us to address as a church. I think we have all had conversations with friends, with family members, with neighbors who claim to be Christian.

But when they begin to share what they believe, we find that it is quite different from what we understand to be Christianity. You and I are living in a world and in a time when true biblical knowledge can be lacking. Now, I'm not saying that this is true of everyone that you come in contact with, but it is becoming increasingly more common.

I have personally heard far too many stories of individuals who have had their faith rocked because someone they knew asked them a question about what they believe, and they were unable to answer that question because they had never put in the time and energy to think about it. Therefore, as this series continues, this idea of doctrine, I consider this really preparation and training for our faith.

To be able to answer the question, "What do you believe, and why do you believe it?" As Pastor Sam stated last week, we will be referencing the Articles of Faith and Position Papers of the Missionary Church. That is the denomination that we are a part of. But I want to make sure that you are aware that our position papers and what we believe, our Articles of Faith, would certainly fall underneath the Christian umbrella and would be accepted by most, if not all, evangelical Christian denominations.

Even though we are using these documents because these are the ones that we are familiar with, these truly are doctrinal beliefs of Orthodox Christianity. Right? Does that make sense? So we're going to be using our documents, but they fit underneath the umbrella of Christianity. And so last week, Pastor Sam started with the topic of the Trinity. I decided to be nice and let Pastor Sam begin with an easy one. All right? Who doesn't understand the Trinity?

Right? So because of that, if you ever have any questions about the Trinity, just talk with Pastor Sam. All right? Now, of course, I am kidding. So much so, in fact, that Saint Augustine said this, one of our church fathers, "There is no subject where error is more dangerous, research more laborious, and discovery more fruitful than the oneness of the Trinity of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit." That is a pretty strong statement.

And of course, in understanding the Trinity, it is important for us to recognize and admit that God is complex within His unity. Current theologian and apologist, some of you have heard of him before, Wes Huff says it this way: "If God is fully comprehensible in His character to you, He is probably a God that you have made up." If we can fully, with our finite minds, understand an infinite God, it's probably because we have made Him up.

Now, this doesn't at all mean that we can't understand anything about Him. It simply means it is going to be a difficult exercise, and you and I should do our best to stay true to Scripture. And at the same time, I praise God that our salvation is not based on the ability to pass a theological exam. Right? Aren't you grateful for that? Our salvation is not based on the ability to understand this fully and pass a theological exam.

God has certainly revealed Himself enough to us through His Word so that we can receive Him as our Savior. As Pastor Sam stated last week when discussing the Trinity, it is important to remember that there is one God who eternally exists in three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Each person of the Trinity is co-equal and co - eternal, meaning they have always existed, and one does not take priority or authority over the other. They are co-equal, co - eternal, and not one of them is inferior. Each member is distinct in personhood and function. And so today, we are going to unpack this a little more, and we are going to talk about God the Father.

And then next week, we're going to take a whole Sunday to talk about God the Son, and then in two weeks, we're going to take another Sunday to talk about God the Holy Spirit as we try to understand and grasp this idea of a triune God. This is not an easy task. And so I ask you to buckle in, and we're going to jump into this topic.

We're going to use lots of words, and I'm going to try to define and work through this together and certainly know that my goal is to pique your curiosity, that you would go and read and study, as we are not going to be able to have the time to fully unpack this. So let's pray, and then we're going to jump in. Heavenly Father, we come before You today with our finite minds trying to understand and comprehend an infinite God.

And so we certainly pray for Your grace and for Your mercy as we do our best to try to understand that. Not with the goal to gain more head knowledge or to be able to win an argument with somebody, but with the goal of drawing closer to You, understanding You more because I have found in my own life, God, that the more I understand You, the more I fall in love with You and the more I am in awe of You.

And so this morning, I pray that You would draw us close. And it's in the name of Jesus we pray. Amen. I'm going to begin by simply reading our position paper as a missionary church and how we understand God the Father. And then I'm going to take some time to define some of the terms because in this paper, there are words that are not used in our everyday speech, and I fully understand that.

And these are words that are used by theologians and by those that have studied for many years to try to explain this and understand this. So I'm just going to read it, and then I'm going to break it down a little bit. So let's start. "We believe in God the Father, begotten of none, the eternal Father of the Lord Jesus Christ. Since God is the Creator, all things, everything you see and all people are from Him and exist for Him.

And as the Author of salvation, He adopts into His family all who are born again by faith. He gloriously upholds and providentially rules over all things in order to accomplish the redemption of His people and the restoration of all creation." Now, that is a small paragraph that is packed with a lot of deep truth.

So let's define some of these terms, some of these words that we don't necessarily use anymore. We said, "We believe in God the Father, begotten of none." The word "begotten" is the past tense of an old English word which simply means "to bring into being." In that sense, it means to father or to sire. And so when we say, "We believe that the Father is begotten of none," we mean that no one brought the Father into being.

Right? He has eternally existed. He has always been and He always will be. This is what it means that He is begotten of none. And again, this is a point at which our finite minds struggle to grasp the idea that something has always existed. I have been in many conversations with individuals that have a materialistic worldview, and they often struggle with my belief and my statement that Scripture says that God has always existed.

And they say, "How can you believe that?" My response to them is that they also have to wrestle with that truth because those that have a materialistic worldview may not believe that God in the Spirit has always existed, but they have to believe that something has always existed. Whether it's rock or a big pile of mud and ooze or whatever else, they also have to wrestle with that same question.

And so even though our minds struggle to comprehend that, something had to have always existed. I can't explain it any more than that. It's clear as mud. Right? Something always existed. It just is what it is. It's either a

spiritual being or stuff. We also use the phrase that we believe in God the Father, begotten of none, the eternal Father of the Lord Jesus Christ.

When we say that Jesus is the eternal begotten Son of the Father, what we mean by that is that Jesus is the only example, one of a kind, of a person who has always, again, from all of eternity, existed but was brought into being by God, the eternal Father, and therefore is the only person of whom it can be said He is truly the Son of the Father.

Now, again, as our minds try to wrap around this, we're using language that we mostly understand, but of course, that falls apart because human fathers, as we think about a father, live in time and space. And they bring human sons and daughters into being at a point in time, but the eternally existing Father brings His eternally existing Son into being. Again, try to grasp that.

Right? Human language is inadequate to fully describe this mysterious relationship that exists between God the Father and God the Son, but yet that is what Scripture clearly teaches. Let's look at some. Psalm 90: 2. The psalmist says, "Before the mountains were born, or You brought forth the whole world, from everlasting to everlasting, You are God ." This is the understanding of God, from everlasting to everlasting.

John 13: 3, John tells us that Jesus knew, God the Son, that God the Father had put all things under His power and that He had come from God and was returning to God. He also has eternally existed. And Paul says in 1 Corinthians 8: 6, " Yet for us there is but one God, the Father, from whom all things came and for whom we live.

And there is but one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom all things come and through whom we live." The connection between God the Father and God the Son. As we look at Scripture and we go back to the Old Testament, God is referred to as Father a few times in the Old Testament, but generally, that reference is used as God being the Father of the nation Israel in the context of God redeeming and forgiving Israel, calling them His children.

But in the New Testament, Jesus revolutionized this by teaching individuals, you and I, to address God intimately as Father or Abba in daily personal prayer. That's what Jesus has called us into.

When His disciples asked Him, "Teach us how to pray," the very beginning of His prayer for us to follow was to say, "Our Father, who art in heaven," meaning that we now relate with God as Father through God the Son, sharing in His sonship through the adoption that we have received through Christ's redeeming work for us.

We now relate to Him as Father. 1 John 3: 1 says, "See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God, and that is what we are." Now, I wanted to intentionally try to bring this down to our level. We're kind of talking up in the clouds right now.

We're having to discuss the idea of the Trinity and God the Father in theological terms. I wanted to bring this down to us, and so I want to give you seven truths about God the Father, seven truths that we can gain from Scripture that help us to understand God the Father. The first truth is this: the Father is not more God - and I forgot to put this in there - than Jesus or the Spirit.

The Father is not more God than God the Son, Jesus, or God the Spirit. Scripture is very clear that the Father is God. John 6:27, Jesus says, "Do not work for food that spoils, but instead for food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. For on Him, God the Father has placed the seal of His approval ." The Father is God.

He dictates and approves of God the Son. The Son is also God. In John 1: 1, we all know this verse, " In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God ." This is God the Son, the Word, the Logos. The Son is God, and the Spirit is also God, not any more or not any less than God the Father or God the Son.

Acts 5: 3 - 4, Peter is having a conversation with Ananias and Sapphira, if you remember. They stole a field, and they lied about it, and they end up losing their lives. In Acts 5, Peter says, "Ananias, how is it that Satan has so

filled your heart that you have lied to the Holy Spirit, God the Holy Spirit, and have kept for yourself some of the money that you received from the land? Didn't it belong to you before it was sold?

And after it was sold, wasn't the money at your disposal? What made you think of doing such a thing? You have not lied to just human beings, but to God, the Holy Spirit." Remember? That's what he was talking about. So the Spirit is also God. And yet, as we read Scripture, there is one God. Deuteronomy 6: 4 is referenced as the Shema.

It is still said every morning and every evening amongst Jewish families today, which says this: "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is..." One. One. There is one divine being who exists as three distinct persons. Now, let me define that a little more as we give another truth about God the Father.

The Father is a distinct person. Pastor Sam mentioned this last week, but there are two times in Scripture that we see God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit all present at the same time, but in different persons. The first one is the baptism of Jesus. If you remember, when Jesus is baptized, that's God the Son present, and the dove, which is God the Holy Spirit, descends on Him, and we hear a voice from heaven that says, "This is my Son whom I love.

With Him I am well pleased." God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. The second time that we see all three persons of the Trinity present is at Jesus' transfiguration on the mountain. Three distinct persons. Now, I understand that all analogies fall apart at some point, but as I was trying to understand this and how I could communicate this idea of three persons but one being, you guys all know that I love to do woodworking, and so I often work with these types of tools.

And so I was thinking of the idea of a claw hammer. A claw hammer is one hammer. When you look in that picture, it's one hammer, but it has three different parts which each have a different function in the hammer. You have the head which hits nails in. You have the claw which pulls nails out, and you have the handle which is the lever and the part that you hold. Each part is distinct from one another, but altogether, it's still only one hammer.

Right? Three persons, three parts, three functions, but all still part of one unit, one God. The Father is a distinct person. The Son is a distinct person. The Holy Spirit is a distinct person, but they are one being, God. Let me give you another truth about the Father. The Father is the source of the Son's mission.

The Father, God the Father, sent God the Son to accomplish His purpose. John 5:37, Jesus says, "And the Father who sent me has Himself testified concerning me." John 5:43, Jesus says, "I have come in my Father's name, and you do not accept me.

But if someone else comes in his own name, you will accept him ." The Father is not superior in His deity compared to God the Son. Rather, there is an eternal relationship, an order within the Trinity. The Father sends, and Jesus is sent, and then the Spirit is sent. Let's go on to number four. The Father is the one that Jesus came to reveal.

God the Father is the one that God the Son came to reveal. John 14: 9, Jesus answered as He is talking with Philip, and Philip is trying to understand God the Father and God the Son. And Jesus says, "Don't you know me, Philip? Even after I have been among you for such a long time, anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. So how can you say, ' Show us the Father'?" Now, don't be confused.

Jesus is not saying He is the Father. He is saying that God the Son perfectly reveals what God the Father is like, meaning when you see Jesus' compassion for sinners, when you see His willingness to forgive, when you see His tenderness and love toward hurting people, the poor, the orphan, the widow, and ultimately, when you see Jesus' willingness to die for us, you aren't seeing a Jesus who is trying to convince a reluctant father to love us.

You are seeing the heart of the Father revealed through the Son. Which leads us to number five. The Father loves the Son eternally. The Father loves the Son eternally. Before creation existed, before you and I were ever created, before the world was created, before everything you see, the Father already loved the Son.

John 17:24, as Jesus is praying, He says this, "Father, I want those You have given me to be with me where I am and to see my glory, the glory that You have given me because You loved me before the creation of the world ." Have you ever thought about that part before? God the Father loved God the Son before the creation of the world.

With this just one verse, we can pull out a lot of truths then. Truth number one being love didn't begin when God created human beings. Love has eternally existed amongst the Trinity, meaning also is true, God didn't create human beings because He was lonely. He already had perfect love and perfect fellowship within the three persons of His being.

The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit have eternally existed in this perfect relationship. 1 John 4: 8 says, "Whoever does not have love does not know God because God is..." Love. Love. Again, these truths are so deep. God doesn't merely have love.

Love belongs to who God eternally is, meaning God cannot be unloving because it goes against His very nature. God must love. Number six, the Father adopts us into His family. It is through Christ, God the Son, that Christians are invited to address God as Father.

The Father has adopted us through the Son by the power of the Spirit. The Father, God the Father, has adopted us into His family through God the Son by the power of the Spirit. Christianity isn't simply about getting forgiven and going to heaven. Did you know that? That's not the goal. That's not the end goal of what we do and why we exist so that we can die and we can go to heaven and we can be forgiven. No.

The goal of Christianity, the goal of our lives, is that you and I would be brought into this perfect, loving relationship that exists between God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. You and I are invited into that perfect relationship that exists. Last one, number seven. The cross shows the Father's heart.

One of the errors that I run into often as I talk with individuals about God and about faith is that we can believe that God the Father is an angry Father who Jesus had to convince to forgive us. Often, people will look at God of the Old Testament, and they will say, "Well, He did all of this killing, and there were lives that were taken, as nations were rising and falling.

And so we have this angry God of the Old Testament, and then we have Jesus, this God of the New Testament, that comes and is all about love and all about grace and all about forgiveness. And so we believe that somehow we have an angry Father God that Jesus had to pacify. We believe that Jesus dies in our place, and because of that, the Father finally falls in love with us. But that is not a proper biblical picture at all.

Again, the most famous verse in our culture today, John 3:16, "For God so..." Loved. Loved the world. "For God the Father so loved the world that He gave God the Son." This is God the Father. The Father gave His Son because He loved us. And as we continue down that path, Jesus willingly gave of Himself. God the Son willingly gave.

John 10:18, Jesus says, "No one takes it from me," His life. He's saying, "No one takes my life from me, but I lay it down on my own accord. For I have authority," God the Son says, "to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. But this command I have received from my Father," God the Father. Jesus willingly gave from Himself. You see in Scripture that God the Father and God the Son aren't working against each other.

They're not battling each other. God the Father sends, God the Son willingly gives, and God the Spirit applies the work of God the Son to us. Wow. Wow. One God acting in perfect unity. So let me close. Again, my goal is to pique your curiosity as you think about the idea of the Trinity, God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.

And my goal is that you would come to the same conclusion I have come to of how wonderful the gift is that we can call God our Father. This is an intimate and a personal relationship with the Creator of the universe and the Redeemer of our soul. He is a perfect Father, not to be compared to our earthly fathers, because every man in here can raise our hands and say, "You know what? Every earthly father has fallen short, us included." Right?

Amen to that. We're not perfect. Now, granted, as we look at our lives, some have been better and some have been worse than others, but God the Father is perfect, and He has adopted us into His family. He has redeemed us from a fallen cycle of sin and death, a cycle that you and I could never get ourselves out of without Him. And so for us, let's not take for granted how beautiful it is that God is our Father.

As always, the altar's are open. If you want to come and do business with God, however He's speaking to your heart today, whatever new realization may have come, you can come to the altar's and pray, and we will allow you to do your business with God. If you would like to receive prayer about anything, it could have nothing to do with the topic we talk about today. It could be something that's going on in your life, and you would love to receive prayer. There will be people on both sides up front that would love to pray for you.

And I can't promise that we or anybody else that prays for you is going to have answers to life's difficult questions, but at the very least, we can promise you that we will lift you up to our heavenly Father who does. And we will do our best to walk with you. I fully understand that talking about God as Father can be a trigger for some of you. It can be a trigger because of your past, because of your earthly father, and you say, "The last thing I want to do is understand God as a heavenly father.

If He is anything like an earthly father." Again, understand that these are the best terms and language we have to understand God as the Father, but understand it is a perfect Father. God is a perfect Father who wants to receive you and to pour His love upon you. And so as we do our best to understand this, we do pray and ask for God to reveal Himself to us that we would be drawn closer to Him.

Let me pray. Heavenly Father, we come before You, truly admitting that our minds cannot wrap around the idea of who You are. But then again, I'm not sure that I would want to worship and serve a God that I could fully explain and understand because You are so far beyond me.

And so I thank You for Your grace and for Your mercy. Would You draw us closer to You? Would You continue to reveal Yourself to us in new ways, knowing that with every new way and every new thing we discover about You, it causes us to be drawn closer? And so, Father, would You receive our praise? We ask this in the name of Jesus. Amen.