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Peace, Sun Prairie
June 11, 2017
Festival of the Holy Trinity

Mathew 28:19

IN THE NAME OF...

He was like any fellow that you work with or play softball with. He complained that a WELS pastor had told him that the Triune God is the only true god and that apart from the Triune God no one can be saved. His reaction was to say: “That’s not only intolerant. That’s not even American.”

I suppose he is correct. Not because WELS members are intolerant or un-American. But because God Himself insists on His own identity. In His Word, the Bible, the triune God reveals Himself to us and declares, *I, even I, am the LORD and there is no other.* The triune God is the one who spells out that any other concept of a god, any other idea or name of god, than the one in the Bible is wrong and false. The triune God is the one who makes clear that apart from Him no one can be saved. He and He alone is real. He and He alone

is true. He and He alone saves. And perhaps that's the surprising thing about this so-called intolerant God: far from being unloving or hate-filled He desires to save all people. That's a far cry from a god who supposedly rewards his followers in the afterlife for destroying as many "infidels" as they can.

Therefore, since salvation is found only in the true God, it is in our best interest to know who the true God is. Especially as our own society becomes less and less tolerant of the Christian faith.

When Jesus sent out the apostles with the Great Commission to go and make disciples of all nations, He gave them the tools to accomplish that work: Baptizing them and teaching them. Matthew 28:19 states, *Baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.*

These words of Jesus reveal the Triune God with great clarity. First, did you notice the discrepancy in singular versus plural? Jesus didn't say to baptize in the names of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, but in the name (singular) of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. One name, but three names. When God talks about His name He means everything He has revealed about

Himself in the Bible -everything, all His activity as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. It would be like everything you know about the name Abraham Lincoln, but there are three names.

However, and this is really important, do not think that God merely appears in three different ways -sometimes like a Father, sometimes like a Son and sometimes like a Spirit. That is completely wrong. Rather, God is three distinct, separate persons. Jesus said, “In the name of *the* Father,” not *a* Father; “in the name of *the* Son,” not *a* Son; and “in the name of *the* Holy Spirit,” not *a* Spirit. Consider the way Jesus talked while He was here on earth. He said things like: *I did not come to do my will but my Father’s will*. He spoke as though He and the Father were two separate persons and each had His own will. In a similar way, He told the disciples, *When I go to the Father I will send you the Counselor, the Holy Spirit*.

It is important to recognize that God is three separate persons because it was not the Father nor the Holy Spirit who became a man and suffered and died on the cross for you. It was God the Son. And being fully God, His death on the cross was infinite enough the pay for all the sins of all humanity, including yours and mine.

Were God not triune, Jesus would only have been a man and nothing more and His death would not have paid for anyone's sins.

But how can it be that He is three separate persons, yet still only one God? This we cannot explain. It is a mystery to us. An awesome mystery. One that inclines us not to be so casual in His presence but to close our mouths and listen when He speaks.

It is neither Allah, nor Buddha, who so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son. It was the triune God. It is neither Brahma, Vishnu nor Shiva by whom we have been saved by grace, through faith as a gift without works so that no one can boast. It is by the triune God. It is neither the Great Spirit of Native American spiritualism, nor the bland shapeless deity of mainstream American sentiment, nor science, nor mother earth, nor atheistic social engineering that promises, *In my Father's house are many rooms. I am going there to prepare a place for you.* It is alone the triune God.

Believing in the triune God is necessary for salvation. It is the triune God who at your Baptism put His name on you and swore His faithfulness to you now and through

eternity. It is the triune God to whom at your confirmation you swore your loyalty until death.