

God the Father:

“Your way, O God, is holy. What god is great like our God?” (Psalm 77:13, ESV)

My dad is bigger than your dad! There are probably as many variations on that theme as there are kids who want to boast in their fathers. While we may not necessarily like our children engaging in this kind of competition, how wonderful it is that they feel such pride in their father that they see him as being better than every other dad.

Children tend to have a very unique view of their fathers. My dad is the greatest dad in the world! He can do anything, the little boy thinks when he sees dad fix a broken toy. My dad can do anything, the little girl thinks, when dad carries her on his shoulders through the park. My dad can do anything, when he drives us safely to grandma’s house, or buys us ice cream, or kicks a soccer ball farther than we can.

But there is a time when we realize that dad can’t do everything. He is, after all, a fallible, sinful, human being, just as we all are. We love him in spite of his faults—but we recognize his shortcomings, too. Oh, he may be the greatest dad in the world, but it may not be because he is better than all the other dads. It is because he is our father.

I don’t know how many men have a t-shirt or mug or desk plaque, which says, “World’s Greatest Dad”. You do know the only one who deserves that recognition, don’t you? All creation declares: *God: the world’s greatest dad*. This is no idle boast. It is the absolute, undeniable truth. Our God is a great God. He is the Almighty God. We confess that God is the creator of heaven and earth. By His power alone do all things exist. More than that, he also organizes, directs, controls and rules over all things. The vastness of space; the stars and the planets; all plants and animals and people—God is greater than all of it. As we sing in that old spiritual, “He’s got the whole world in His hands!” That’s an awesome thought when it comes right down to it. No wonder the psalmist says: ***“When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, what is man that you are mindful of him, and the son of man that you care for him?”*** (Psalm 8:3–4, ESV) What are we, next to the greatness and glory of God? God is holy, powerful and wondrous. We are sinful, insignificant creatures. God is everything. We are nothing. In the commandments, Luther taught us to say: *we should fear and love God*. That word fear means that we are to have a holy reverence and respect for God, because He is God Almighty.

But this Almighty God comes to us in love and bids us to call Him “Father”. This is a privilege that comes from His grace, not a right that we somehow have. God is everybody’s God, but He is not everybody’s Father. But you can call Him Father. He has brought you into His family through His grace and love for you. You can be sure of that through the promises He has made to you in your baptism. And if you aren’t yet baptized God is speaking in His Word today to assure you of all He has done that you may know Him as He wants to be known: as the awesome God who is our Father. And our Father can do anything! He created and preserves all that exists. He cares for each and every aspect of His creation. And He has bought us back from sin and death that we may live with Him in His glorious home forevermore. What a wonderful Father we have! How blessed we are to be part of His family.

God the Son

“Whoever does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent him.” (John 5:23, ESV)

In our society today we tend to take opinion polls about everything, as if the opinions that people have about something actually establish what is true. More than a few pollsters have asked a question similar to the one Jesus once asked His disciples: ***“Who do people say that the Son of Man is?”*** (Matthew 16:13, ESV) We may not hear so much today about who people say Jesus is, as we hear what they think about Him. They may think He was a great person, a good man, a wonderful example. Most fail to see Him for who He really is. They don’t understand that He is God. They believe

things *about* Jesus. They don't necessarily believe *in* Him.

When the disciples told Jesus what the people thought about Him, Jesus asked a more important question: ***“But who do you say that I am?” Simon Peter replied, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.”*** (Matthew 16:15–16, ESV)

The disciples quickly recognized that Jesus is no mere man. He is not just a pious example of religious faith, a kind of super-saint. He is Emmanuel—God with us. In a miracle beyond our comprehension, the divine, eternal Son, who is the true God, equal to the Father, becomes flesh and blood. All the vastness, the wonder and the infinite glory of the Eternal God is somehow squeezed into time and humanity. He is born of the virgin Mary and laid to rest in a manger stall. Through Him the universe was created, and yet He allowed Himself to be arrested, beaten, and crucified by the very people He created. But this wasn't just some mixed up set of circumstances. It was the plan all along. We know it from those wonderful words that mean so much to so many: ***“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.”*** (John 3:16–17, ESV)

Do we grasp the great significance of this? The Lord of heaven and earth humbled Himself to be born, to live, to suffer and to die upon a cross, all so that He could save us from our sin. He, who was and is holy and sinless gave Himself as a ransom for us. He died so that we need not die. He died to destroy the power that sin has over us. And then, to show once and for all that He is, indeed God, He rose again from the dead and is alive even now, interceding for you and me, governing all things for our sake, for the sake of the very people for whom He was willing to die.

When you confess in the creed, “I believe in Jesus Christ”, you are telling the world that you know Jesus is God. You are telling them that Jesus is the only way to heaven. You are telling them that Jesus is the only Truth, for everything else is the lies of Satan. You are saying that Jesus is the Lord of life, and that your life is bound up in Him so that with Paul we can say: ***“the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.”*** (Galatians 2:20, ESV)

God the Holy Spirit

“For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.” (Romans 8:14, ESV)

Wouldn't it be nice if Jesus were still living among us today, so that we could see Him, touch Him and talk to Him? I know I've thought it more than once. I don't think it's just a faith thing—after all, I know I believe in Christ, even if He hasn't had dinner with me like He ate with the disciples, or even if I didn't have Him teaching my seminary classes. But it would be nice if we could talk to Him face to face as the disciples did, especially about the things that are hard for us to understand.

The disciples themselves felt that way when Jesus told them: ***“My children, I will be with you only a little longer.”*** (John 13:33, NIV84) But Jesus, what are we going to do without you? How will we manage without your guidance, your care and your presence? How will we ever be able to stand the pain of being separated from You?

Jesus made a wonderful promise to His followers, and that includes you and me. He said: ***“I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you.”*** (John 14:16–17, ESV) The word, “Counsellor” means one who has been called to one's side to be of help—as an advocate, a spokesman or mentor. And the one who is our counsellor, the one who is with us and in us, is the Holy Spirit. He, who is equal to the Father and the Son, who is True God, has chosen to live with us and be in us.

It is possible for us to forget the wonderful blessings that God the Holy Spirit brings to us when we put so much emphasis on Jesus Christ as our Saviour and Lord. Yet it is the Holy Spirit who leads us to faith in Jesus Christ. It is the Holy Spirit who works in the Word and Sacraments to bring to us both the awareness of our sinfulness, and the comfort of God's amazing grace, greater than our sin. It is God the Holy Spirit who is at work in the church today to lead us and guide us in all the things we do for the glory of God. And it is the Holy Spirit who enriches our lives with the

abundance of His goodness.

The Holy Spirit is God in us to help us in our struggles against temptation. He is with us to comfort us in the moments when the devil would lead us to despair. He is in us to bring us peace when the frustration, craziness and confusion of the world would overwhelm us. He is God in us to assure us of the forgiveness, life and salvation that are ours in Christ. How blessed we are! The God who created us, and the God who in love redeemed us, is also the God who is with us and will be with us to bring us to the fulness of His glory in the light of Christ. Oh blessed, holy Trinity, thanks and praise be to You for Your great revelation of glory, and for Your Salvation! Amen.

It is customary on this day of the church year to use the Athanasian Creed. While we did not use that creed today, it does set before us the wonderful reality of God in Three Persons, the blessed Trinity. And so the true church confesses that we worship one God in Trinity and Trinity in Unity, neither confusing the persons nor dividing the substance. For the Father is one person, the Son is another, and the Holy Spirit is another. But the Godhead of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit is one: the glory equal, the majesty coeternal.

Such as the Father is, such is the Son, and such is the Holy Spirit: the Father uncreated, the Son uncreated, the Holy Spirit uncreated; the Father infinite, the Son infinite, the Holy Spirit infinite; the Father eternal, the Son eternal, the Holy Spirit eternal. And yet there are not three Eternals, but one Eternal, just as there are not three Uncreated or three Infinities, but one Uncreated and one Infinite.

In the same way, the Father is almighty, the Son almighty, the Holy Spirit almighty; and yet there are not three Almightyies, but one Almighty. So the Father is God, the Son is God, the Holy Spirit is God; and yet there are not three Gods, but one God. So the Father is Lord, the Son is Lord, the Holy Spirit is Lord; and yet there are not three Lords, but one Lord.

But do you want to know the best part? Although, with Paul we have to say: ***“Great indeed, we confess, is the mystery of godliness”*** (1 Timothy 3:16, ESV) We have the joy of knowing that this wonderful, marvellous God is the God who creates all things and still cares for us. He is the God who loves us and saves us from sin and death, bringing us forgiveness and life through the death and resurrection of the Eternal Son, and who is with us always to the end of the world and through all eternity. This, my dear people, so loved by God, is most certainly true! Amen.