

Title: The Fellowship of the Name
Text: Matthew 28.16-20
Theme: The Trinity
Series: Matthew #133
Prop Stmt: Understanding God for who he is (Trinity) awakens our souls to the glories of our present and future salvation.

Read Text:

When we baptize, we say, “I baptize you my brother/sister, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Buried with him (Christ) in the likeness of his death, and raised with him in the likeness of his resurrection.” We baptize people by immersion in water who have professed faith Christ because, for reasons covered last Sunday morning, this is not only what baptism means, and how the early church practiced it, but it best illustrates the means by which we are placed into fellowship with God and with all those who are in fellowship with God. Baptism is the means by which a believer publicly professes to be a believer and is identified as a member of the fellowship.

Now, last Sunday morning I laid out my argument as to why baptism is to be understood and practiced this way. I wanted to convince you from the Scriptures of the rightness of this position. This morning, I want to capture your affections. This morning I want your heart to be caught up by this truth so that you see that this ordinance of believer’s baptism is not only theologically correct, but I want you to see that it is beautiful! I am convinced that this is one of the most amazing and beautiful truths you will ever consider.

When you read v.19, Jesus says that we are to baptize in the name (singular) of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. He says “name,” yet he identifies 3 persons. When Jesus says this, he is doing two things: He is saying that God is triune and he is saying that baptism illustrates the reality that through Christ we are immersed into this Trinitarian relationship. Christ commanded for us to be baptized in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit because our baptism illustrates our salvation/entrance into the relationship that God enjoys as God and it illustrates the relationship we have with the people of God, in the relationship that God enjoys as God.

When you come to faith in Christ, you are saved from sin and death and saved to God and life. What you are saved from is beyond grievous and awful to describe. But what you are saved to is incredible and impossible to fully grasp. The bad that you are saved from is incredibly bad, but the good that you are saved to is absolutely amazing. It is so amazing that it has the power to cause your soul to sing and your heart to hope even in the deepest night of the soul. Let’s start with the first one. Our baptism illustrates our salvation that places us into:

- I. **The relationship that God enjoys as God.** (*“in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit”*)

The relationship that God enjoys as God is:

A. Trinitarian

Our Triune God enjoys a relationship as God that is perfectly enjoyable and gloriously all-satisfying. That relationship has always existed. Therefore, God created this world in order to have a people that he would bring into this relationship that we might enjoy him and each other. That means that our redemption is not only being rescued from sin and hell, it is being drawn into and absorbed into the deliriously satisfying and happy relationship that God has a God.

We learned back in Matthew 6 from the prayer that Jesus taught us to pray that Jesus calls God, "Father." This is not just what we are to call him, this is what Jesus calls him. "Our Father." The fact that Jesus is the Son of God means that he has a Father. Jesus also said, "*I am the way, and the truth and the life, no one comes to the Father except through me.*" Before God was Creator, he was Father. Before God was Ruler, he was Father. And you might be thinking, "ok, so – what?" Here is what I want you to grasp. We learn from Genesis 1 and Colossians 1 that the Father, Son and Spirit were all involved in creation. In order to understand what God was up to in creation, it is helpful for us to grasp what God was like and what God was doing before creation. Creation is the expression of this relationship. So, what can we learn about this Trinitarian relationship?

B. Love and Delight

Jesus sheds some light on this when he says in John 17.24, "*Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory that you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world.*" So, what was God doing before creation? God was the Father who was loving his Son. This means that God, before all his ways, is gloriously and wondrously fatherly. He is Father through and through, inside and out. Everything that he does, he does as a Father. That means that God gives life. He did not start giving life when he chose to create. He did not look at the earthly family that he made and decided that a father was a nice image that he could cultivate for himself. From eternity he has been giving life. (1 John 4.7-8) Before God did anything else, for all of eternity God has been loving, begetting, sourcing, and delighting in the Son. God in the OT is not different than Jesus in the NT. Jesus, in the NT, is the One who has been eternally proceeding from God of the OT. Jesus said, (John 17.24) "*You loved me before the creation of the world.*" The Son, (Colossians 1.16) was the one through whom all things were created, meaning that Jesus is (also) the uncreated One. Therefore, the Son is not only eternal, but from eternity past, he has been proceeding from the Father and has been receiving life from the Father and glory from the Father and was loved by the Father. There never was a time when the Son did not exist. If there was a time that the Son did not exist then there was a time when God was not a Father and therefore was not loving. But, the Son (Heb. 1.3) is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being.

The Father is never without the Son but, like a lamp, it is the very nature of the Father to shine out of his Son. And likewise, it is the very nature of the Son to be the one who

shines out from his Father. See John 3.35; 5.20 and 14.31. The Son and the Father have a relationship that is so full of joy that (Jn.4.34) the Father's pleasure is as food to the Son. It really is his sheer delight to do as his Father says. This relationship has form to it. The Father is portrayed as the lover and the Son is called the Beloved. While we know that the Son loves the Father, the emphasis in the Bible is on the Father's love for his Son. The Father is the head. He is the source. He sends the Son and directs Him. The Son never sends the Father nor directs him. We also discover that the Father sends the Spirit and the Son sends the Spirit, but the Spirit does not send the Father, yet the Spirit led the Son into the wilderness to be tested.

At his baptism the Father demonstrates his love for the Son by declaring it and by giving him the Spirit. So, now we begin to see the entire Trinity in operation. It is very personal, and very exciting. The Spirit excites the delight of the Father in the Son and the delight of the Son in the Father and their love is bound in the fellowship of the Holy Spirit. (2 Cor. 13.14). The Spirit makes the Father's love known to the Son, who calls the Father, Abba, which is something that the Spirit enables us to do as well. (Rom. 8.15; Gal. 4.6) Jesus loves to make the Father known and the Father loves to exalt the Son and the Spirit loves for people to see the Father and the Son and the love they have for each other. God's love (Father and Son) is so perfect that it is shared with the Spirit who reverberates it back and forth between the Father and the Son. This love is so intense that the Father absolutely delights in the Son.

Therefore, we could say that God's life as God is the greatest life ever and therefore greater than all other life. God is not only the source of life, but he is therefore the definition and standard of life. The relationship that God has as God is how life is supposed to be. It is what God created us for. It is so hard for us to grasp this because our selfishness filters everything that we understand about God and about everything. If, that filter could ever be removed (and it will be), our view of God's perfections would rise to levels never considered possible, which is one of heaven's great promises. There is no end to our enjoyment of God. We see evidences of this in the Scriptures in both the testimony of the Father at the baptism of Christ (Matt.3) and at the Transfiguration of Christ (Matt 17.5). In both cases, the Father delights in the Son, not because of what the Son is doing at the moment, but the Father delights in his Son as his Son. There is no doubt that the Father loves the Son and delights in the Son and is pleased by the Son because of the incarnation, humiliation, obedient life, sin-bearing, wrath-appeasing death, because the Father raises him from the dead and exalts him in heaven and over the earth. But, before the Father delighted in what the Son did, he delighted in the Son himself.

So, here is what I hope will grip your heart. In Matthew 3, we witness the Trinity at the baptism of Christ and the Father says how much he loves his Son and is pleased with his Son. Then in chapter 17 we witness the Trinity again at the Transfiguration of Christ and once again the Father says how pleased and satisfied he is with the Son. Do you see what you are supposed to see? This is a relationship that is so perfect, so comfortable, so happy, so joyous, so secure, so committed, so enduring, that it is the most attractive, compelling, heart-warming, soul-rapturing relationship that you have ever imagined. It awakens your heart to realize that there is a relationship that you never dreamt was

possible for someone to experience. This relationship that God enjoys is delight-based and not performance-based. God delights in himself because of who he is and who he is drives what he does. In his presence there is fullness of joy. At his right hand are pleasures forevermore. What is the glue that holds God together? It is the love that the Father, Son and Spirit have for each other. This love is the source of delight, joy and satisfaction. The closer you get to the fellowship of God, the closer you are to love, delight, joy and satisfaction.

II. God's relationship as God informs my relationship with God.

Do you see what it is about God that generates and excites our love for him? Before God was creator and the lawmaker and law-enforcer, he was Father, Son and Spirit, loving and delighting in himself.

If you were speeding down the road and a policeman caught you, pulled you over and ticketed you, you might be remorseful, you might be resentful, but the fact that the policeman was a law-enforcer would not cause your heart to love him. If you were speeding down the road and a policeman missed you, or simply chose not to pull you over, or pulled you over and let you off with a warning, you would most likely feel relief, perhaps gratitude, but you would still most likely not love that policeman with your heart. If God is simply the chief law-maker and enforcer, and if salvation is just getting off the hook, then, my response is relief and gratitude, but not worship, awe and adoration. But, if God is Trinitarian who loves and delights perfectly in himself and if we are through Christ immersed into this relationship, then we will love him with all of our hearts and souls and beings. Here is another way to think of it.

Let's say that you have a friend in high school who invites you to go on vacation with their family for two weeks. On day one, the dad is driving the van and gets a flat tire, forgot to make reservations and ended up in a construction zone that took 3 hours to get through. The mom is livid and starts sniping at the dad and telling him and everyone else about all of his failures and he starts yelling back and telling everyone about every embarrassing thing that she has done, and that was the best day of the trip. After 2 weeks of this non-stop arguing, fighting, and tension, you cannot wait to get home. It doesn't matter how perfect the weather is. You count down the days and the hours til you get some relief from this. Why? Because the glue that holds that family together is not very sticky. In fact, you feel that the only reason why they don't kill each other is because you would be a witness.

But, at least you get to get out of it. Think about your friend who is stuck with this day after day after day. When the parents of the home, or the managers at work, or the leaders of the company, or the leaders in the church are all fighting and bickering and manipulating like that, everyone wants to get away. What a curse it would be if you were trapped in a place like that forever.

Now, let's say that you grew up in an orphanage where you were abused, neglected, and not wanted. And somehow, you spent a weekend with a family where everyone was kind,

respectful, happy and comfortable. Here was a family that loves each other and is devoted to each other, and delights in each other, and listens to each other and encourages each other, and makes certain that there is a place for each other. They are always looking out for the other. The depth of the individuals comes from their relationship to each other. They are more together than they are individually and yet individually, they are amazing. And you are not a threat to this. Immediately you are accepted. In fact, you are wanted. You are loved. Never before had you felt so secure and so free. You looked at this family and thought, “if I ever get a family, I want it to be like this.” Here was a family where everyone wanted to be together and where everyone really belonged. What a dream it would be if you woke up and this was your family. When you come to faith in Christ you are, through Christ, immersed into the delight-based relationship that God enjoys as God. That is why we are to baptize (immerse) in the name of the Father, and of the Son and the Holy Spirit. Every person who comes to faith in Christ is brought into this relationship where he/she gets to bask in the love, delight, joy and satisfaction that God enjoys as God. God’s enjoyment as God is the highest enjoyment and highest good. God’s enjoyment of us is an expression of his enjoyment of himself and never at the expense of it. Our enjoyment of God is never at the expense of God’s enjoyment of himself. And our enjoyment of God is exponentially increased as we enjoy God with others. Our true enjoyment of each other is never at the expense of our enjoyment of God. It is God’s enjoyment of himself and therefore us that enables us to truly enjoy each other. In order for God to offer us a perfect eternity, God has to be perfect. In order for God to offer us eternal enjoyment God had to be perfectly enjoyable.

III. God’s relationship as God informs my relationship with others. (“*baptizing them*”)

The Father, Son and Spirit are persons who have real relationships with each other. We call them the fellowship of the Trinity. They have always been in relationship with each other. So, when Jesus commands his disciples to go and make disciples, we understand that through Christ you are immersed into this relationship that God enjoys as God and he welcomes you and others into it. When you come to faith in Christ you are placed into a new family called the church. The source of our relationships, and the glue of our relationships is the Trinity. We are all immersed into God who delights in himself and in us. So, what should our relationships look like? They should be...

A. Welcoming and Generous

This love is so glorious that it is worthy of others experiencing, so God created the world. God loves to include, which is why God chose to create. His love is not for keeping to himself, but for sharing it with others. He created the world in order for there to be a people who would experience this love. God did not create because he was bored. We are the recipients of his creating, electing and re-creating love. God’s love is incredibly generous. There is plenty to go around. There is plenty of room at the table. Because of the Trinity, you have time for others. Because of the Trinity you have room in your heart to love more people. Because of the Trinity, you can be focused on others. This is the heart of evangelism, missions, the great commission, and our reason for existence.

B. Committed and Sacrificial

From 1 Corinthians 11.3 and Ephesians 5.25-26 we see that the Father-Son relationship begins in the same way a spring in the ground is the source of a creek, which turns into a river, which becomes a waterfall of love. The Father is the lover and the head of the Son, so the Son goes out to be the lover and the head of the church. (John 15.9) As the Father is the lover and the Son is the beloved, so Christ becomes the lover and the church becomes the beloved. How could Christ love us so much that he would die for us? He can love us because he himself is loved! Christ was the beloved who became the lover so that we could be the beloved who become the lovers. How does Christ love? He loves in a committed and sacrificial way. Therefore, how are we to love? In a committed and sacrificial way. One of the reasons why the New Testament churches had membership is because these local churches were comprised of people who were committed to each other and were willing to sacrifice for one another. Your sacrificial commitment to one another (church membership) is one of the primary means through which your life puts God on display.

I know that I am really pushing back against the culture on this one. Most people do not want to be tied down. But that is why authentic Christianity is so counter-cultural. We are an outpost of the kingdom of Christ in a foreign land. We are a foreign embassy in another country, representing another kingdom. Our King is committed to us and calls us to live that out to one another.

C. Pure and Protective

God loves his relationship as God and is gloriously and fiercely protective of it and will not allow anything to threaten it or diminish it. Sin is toxic to relationships. Our commitment to one another is a commitment to watch over one another and help one another be on guard against sin. Christ is committed to the purity of his bride, the church. He sent us the Spirit to help protect his bride and purify his bride. We, as members of this church, are called to cooperate with the Spirit in order to pursue the purity and the protection of the bride. One of the fundamental ways that we do that, is by praying for one another. Please pray for one another. Use the names of our members listed every week on the weekly email. Use the church directory on your phone. If God did not intend to answer our prayers, he would never have taught us to pray, right?

D. Delight-based

Contrast that with performance-based relationships. If our church family is characterized by performance-based relationships then I am constantly being judged by you and you by me to see if we measure up to the code. There is no delight in that. There is no security in that. You only belong to the degree that you measure up. You only fit in to the degree that you are good enough. But a delight-based relationship is radically different and is scary to people who have only known performance-based relationships. But just as the Father delights in the Son because he is his Son, and the Son delights in the Father and

the Father and Son delight in the Spirit who delights in their relationship, we are called to delight in others. Delighting in others is basking in the joy of others. Having a delight-based view of relationships means that you are focused on others. God's enjoyment as God is the trust fund from which he gives enjoyment to you. God delights in you. You are so delighted in with a delight that cannot be depleted. That trust fund is inexhaustible. Delighting in others is basking in the joy of others with a happiness that comes from the trust fund of God. We are resourced to be able to live with a view toward of others that says, "Your joy is my joy." I am committed to your joy.

E. Confident in the future.

What was Jesus confident about? He was confident in his Father's love. His Father told him. He was confident in his Father's promises. Therefore, he was confident in the future. Christ knew that he would not see corruption. Christ knew that he would rise again. Christ knew that he would ascend back to heaven. Christ knew that he would share in the glory of his Father. He was so confident in the future, that he endured all that he did for us. Do you know what I am confident in? I am confident in Christ. I am confident in the gospel. I am confident in the Word. Therefore, I am confident that every single one of you who has trusted in Christ is going to make it home before dark. I am confident that we are going to stand shoulder to shoulder, arm in arm, in hands raising, fist-pumping, heaven shaking thunderous applause and worship of Christ. I am confident that you are going to look so much like Jesus that in a way it will be hard to tell you apart. I am confident that you will be so perfect, so complete, so happy, so holy, so joyful, so free, and so pure that you are going to be blown away. And I want to treat you now in anticipation of that day because that is how God treats us. In fact he commanded us to be baptized into his name because we have immersed into this already. We only await our experience to catch up to his promise.