

Sermon Transcript

Bring the Light, Bring the Hope

John 16:12-15 | Trinity Sunday | June 15, 2025 | Pastor John Klawiter, preaching

Grace and peace to you my friends in Christ,

When Moses faced God, for the first time, he was called to lead God's people out of Egypt. God spoke to Moses through a burning bush.

Moses, hid his face from the bush because he was afraid to look at God. Reluctantly, he asked, "who am I to go to pharaoh and bring the Israelites to freedom?"

God said, "I'll be with you."

Then, Moses asks another interesting question. "God, if I tell the Israelites this plan and they ask what is your name, what should I say?"

God in the bush said "I AM WHO I AM" and this name of the LORD was so holy, it couldn't even be uttered.

God's name, when spelled with the capital letters YHWH, is Yahweh.

This phrase of the "I AM" might sound familiar as we look to the gospel of John, who attributes 7 different "I AM" statements that describe Jesus.

It's not a coincidence that each of these statements is a fulfillment of the language attributed to God through Moses.

Yet, those around Jesus, didn't fully get it. They didn't understand his nature or what his exact relationship was to God.

Are you God? Are you like God? If you are the "Son of God", does that make you almost God? God, Jr?

You can see the challenges that the followers of Jesus had. How do we explain the nature of God?

And nobody, like Moses, flat out asks the question "if a bunch of Lutherans in Forest Lake 2,000 years from now ask how to describe your nature, what should I say?"

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Jesus never uses the word Trinity, but time after time in John's gospel, he explains his relationship with the Father, our Creator, and he also promises an Advocate, or as we just heard, "the Spirit of Truth."

This model of the Trinity makes some sense, but it didn't come naturally. In fact, it took a few centuries to fully articulate and shape an agreed upon doctrine of the nature of God.

Why did it take so long?

While Paul and the Apostles helped spread the word of Jesus, this very act of sharing the good news was meant with resistance—if you were worshiping God, as taught through Jesus, you weren't worshiping the emperor.

Punishment, imprisonment, and martyrdom—death—were all possible outcomes of following Jesus.

Until something changed. By the 300's, Emperor Constantine became the first ruling leader who converted to Christianity. Suddenly, "Jesus" was in power.

After years of persecution, how would Christians respond to those who disagreed now that they had the ear of the emperor? I wish I could tell you it went great. Graceful, compassionate, caring.

It did not.

Not all believers believed the same way. Not that unlike today, when there are over 200 denominations in the USA and over 45,000 globally, just imagine trying to get all of us to agree on the same principles. Yet, back in the early 300's, the disagreements were over basic functional understanding of who Jesus was and how to define the three expressions of God.

Emperor Constantine wanted the Christian church to get their act together because he wanted peace among his empire.

Now that Christians knew it was safe to practice their faith openly, the call went out for the first church council meeting. It lasted three months.

That meeting was known as the "Council of Nicaea"... for more on what happened there, Austin Suggs from "Gospel Simplicity" will explain why that was so important...

VIDEO then Image of Council

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It wasn't finished. There was turmoil and chaos. Insiders and outsiders—who, depending on who was in charge, found their roles reversed. But the groundwork was set. They did important work at this council.

In our church, we follow the mission statement that we are “Led by the Spirit to share God's grace.” That's a very trinitarian way to look at our task—the Spirit carries us into the world.

Jesus reminds the disciples and those of us witnessing now that so much of faith is staying attuned to what is coming, and trusting in its unfolding. It is receiving the gifts of wisdom from the Spirit and walking through the uncertainty, even as we trust the certainty that we are not alone and that the Trinity (above, around, within us) is guiding us to the truth that looks like love.

So, what is coming? How do we walk through the uncertainty?

I think Yarborough has a clue for us—the truth looks like love.

This has been a rough week to find the good news. To find the love. We want a magic wand that can just fix everything.

Israel attacked Iran. Marines and the National Guard descended upon LA. Two politicians and their spouses were shot, right here in Minnesota.

Even news that Luther Seminary, where I received my education to become a pastor, made the announcement on Tuesday they are selling their remaining property and downsizing staff. The future education for clergy like me and Deacon Nina continues to be reshaped and look vastly different than the community we enjoyed.

The world seems different. Strange. Unsettled.

Yet, as I talked to a dad at a grad party, he reminded me of the advice he gave to the girls volleyball team he coached.

They were down by a dozen points early in the season. He said he took a timeout and huddled them up. “Girls, stop playing like you're gonna win the match on this point. You can only win one point at a time.”

They loosened up. They played within themselves. And then they came all the way back and won the set. Then the match. The season was marked with the motto, “just win one.”

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Is that what the Spirit is calling our church to do? We aren't called to heal all that is broken, but for today, "Just love one."

That church in the early 300's under Emperor Constantine was attempting to unite, but they continued the patterns of exclusion and condemning those who disagreed. It was a work in progress.

The final product of the Nicene Creed was spirit-led, filled with compromise and conversation that took place over the next 50 years. Because those early bishops knew the role: put together a statement of belief that most accurately describes our faith that can be agreed upon. They did that.

Today, I know that discussions over religion, government spending, health care, international wars, or any hot-button political topic will rarely bring unanimous agreement. We focus on the little things. What do we, Faith Lutheran, do to bring good news to our community, our homes, our hearts?

In a world filled with darkness, hate, violence, distrust, fear... we are called to bring the light. Bring the hope. Bring the sacred moments. Bring Christ's love.

Be the non-anxious presence in a room when someone is struggling with a health diagnosis. Be the person who speaks up when you see a neighbor mistreated. Be the human that says, one idea at a time, I can do something to take care of my planet.

Through Christ, we know that we look forward to the resurrection of the dead. It's a great promise to look towards—heaven!

But it's our calling to be stewards of the life of the world to come. The Spirit prods us forward to tomorrow. Amen.