

Deuteronomy 6:4-9

Every year we celebrate **Trinity** Sunday. It always falls on the First Sunday after Pentecost. Trinity Sunday is the day which concludes the **festival** portion of the Church year, and leads us into that long stretch of “Sundays after Pentecost,” which covers nearly one **half** of the year. Celebrating Trinity Sunday is an **old** tradition. A **few** celebrated it as early as the year 1305, but it wasn’t **universally** observed until 1334. At that time, the Christians felt it was both wise and beneficial to set aside one special Sunday on which we **emphasize** what the **Triune God** has done in the **past**; and **still** does - both **for** us, as well as **in** us.

Therefore, again today we will follow this 675 year old custom, as we look at **Three Ways To Worship The Trinity**. Our text today begins with a passage which is known as “The Great **Shema**” - “*Hear, O Israel; the Lord, our God, the Lord is **one**.*” The Great Shema is still used by the Jews **today**, as a confessional statement of God’s **unity**. Especially in the original Hebrew language, the word “**one**” resounds with a definite **finality** - “*Shema Israel, Adonai Eloh8nu, Adonai **exhad!***” - **one** - God is **one!** He is not **divisible** into separate **forces**, as the **pagans** try to do with Him - designating a separate **sun** god, and **rain** god, and **fire** god, and all the **others**. But rather, God is **one** - the Source of **all** natural phenomena. The heathen **idols** are mere **copies** - counterfeits - and not very **good** ones at that.

Our text shows us very clearly that God is **one** - but interestingly enough, it **also** shows us that He is **three**. Didn’t that first sentence sound a little **repetitious** to you? Why didn’t Moses simply write, “*The LORD is one,*” or “*Our God is one?*” I don’t believe God uses a lot of extra words in His Bible just to **impress** us, or to fill up a lot of **space** on a page. I believe that each and every word has **significance** and **meaning**. This opening passage in our text gives us a good **example** of that. It is a perfect statement for the doctrine of the **Trinity** - the **tri-unity** - when it says, “*The LORD - our God - the LORD - one.*” Only in **theology** can you get away with the statement that **one** plus **one** plus **one** equals **one**. Several **other** triple statements follow this **first** one, and we will use **one** of them as the outline for today’s sermon. We may worship God in **three** ways; first of all as we let His commandments live in **our** hearts - secondly, as we teach them to our **children** - and thirdly, as we show them to **others** by our example.

The first way of worshiping God is a **prerequisite** for the others. “*Love the LORD your God with all **your** heart, and with all **your** soul, and with all **your** strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be upon **your** hearts.*”

It all starts right here with **you** and **me**, and our **personal** faith. God Himself has **given** us that faith, and He wants it to be **strong**. Yet, so often our faith is **weak - not** strong. Even though we are the people whom God provides with **strength** for our faith in His Word and Sacraments; we are the **same** people who **eat** too much, and **drink** too much, and **smoke** too much, and **work** too much, and **play** too much. We go **against** God's commandments every day, even though we **know** that God has given those commandments to us for our **benefit**. Yet, in spite of all our weaknesses and shortcomings, God still **loves** us, and He gives us every reason to **respond** to Him with **our** love.

In the Old Testament God tried again and again to get that loving **response** from the **Israelites**. He **chose** them to be His special people - He **delivered** them out of bondage in Egypt - He **provided** them with food, and water, and clothing for 40 years in the wilderness - and He even drove the other nations **out** of the Promised Land, and **gave** it to the Israelites as their **inheritance**. But the desired **response** was hardly **ever** there - and when it **was**, it still was only a half-hearted love toward God's commands. Unfortunately, **we're** not much **different**. God has done just as much for **us** - if not **more** - than He did for the Israelites. As Jesus Himself told Nicodemus in today's Gospel, "*God so loved the world that He gave His one and only **Son**, that whoever believes in Him should **not perish**, but have **eternal life**.*" And all God wants **us** to do to **thank** Him for this wonderful gift of His Son, is to **love** Him - to love Him with **untainted** sincerity - to love Him with **all** our **heart**. He wants us to love Him without any **reservations** - to love Him with **all** our **soul**. And He wants us to love Him using **everything** we can muster - to love Him with **all** our **strength**. But we **don't** - because we **can't**.

And yet, it's not as if we don't love God **at all**. We **do** - we love Him **very** much. That should be **obvious**. If we **didn't** love God we wouldn't even **be** here to **worship** Him. We wouldn't **bother** to attend the Lord's **Supper**. We wouldn't invest **any** time in reading and studying His **Word**. We wouldn't bring our **children** to be **baptized** into His kingdom. We wouldn't go through all the **expense** involved in teaching our children about Jesus through Vacation Bible School, and Sunday School, and Lutheran Elementary School, and Lutheran High School. But the Triune God **is** important to us, and we **want** Him to be important to our **children** also. Needless to say, that's also what God **Himself** wants. He says, "***Impress** them (God's commandments) on your **children**. Talk about them when you sit at home, and when you walk along the road; when you lie down, and when you get up.*"

What comes to mind for you when you think about **impressing** someone? Don't we usually visualize **showing off** - doing something **dramatic**, or **dangerous**, or **expensive**, or in some way **extraordinary** - something which will not only **catch** their attention, but which will also **hold** that attention? Do you suppose **that's** what God means when He says, "*Impress My commandments on your children?*" Actually, I think it's much **simpler** than that. Anyone who has ever helped make sugar cookies knows what an **impression** is. When you push the cookie cutter down into the soft dough, it leaves a **picture** - an **impression** - and it doesn't **go away**! It gets baked right into the cookie! **Children** are very much like soft dough. **Something** is going to leave that deep impression on them. God wants it to be His **commandments**. However, if we don't take the time to be **at home** with our children, and to **talk** about God's commandments with them - something **else** might leave its impression on them **first**. If that should happen - and it often **does** - then our only hope is that this **bad** impression hasn't yet been **baked in**. Then we would still be able to **reshape** the dough, and start all over again from scratch. However, bear in mind that once the dough has been **baked**, it becomes **inflexible**, and then if you try to **reshape** it, it **crumbles**.

And finally, God would also have us take His commandments **beyond** the borders of our family. Our text concludes, "*Tie them as symbols on your hands, and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses, and on your gates.*" The Jews interpreted those words very **literally**, and as a result, they developed the practice of wearing **phylacteries**. A phylactery is made up of Bible passages rolled up, and placed into a tiny box, which is then tied onto the back of the **hand**, or on the **arm**, or on the **forehead**. This was usually done during the time of the morning **prayers**, and served as a **reminder** of God's love, and promises, and commands - sort of like when you tie a **string** around your finger in order to help you **remember** something.

But actually, God had something a little less **literal** in mind with these words. He wanted us to **remember** His love, and promises, and commands, so that these things would **show** in our **lives**. Notice how God wanted His commandments to **emanate out** from the individual. He told them to tie them on their **hands** and **foreheads**, on the **doorframes** of their houses, and even on their **gates** - probably the **city gates**. In other words, they were to let **everybody** know that they were **believers**. And that's what **we** are to do as well - let **everybody** know that you are a **Christian**. **Live** your faith in your **home**, in your **neighborhood**, in your **town**, and everywhere **else** as well.

That's what we're doing **right now**, as we worship the Triune God. That's what we're doing every time we receive the Lord's **Supper**. And that's even what we're doing at our various **fellowship** events - **especially** those events that are held **away** from our church **building** (like our picnic). Whenever we gather together as a group of Christians, we are showing all those who pass by that Christians can have a **good time** by **following** God's Commandments, rather than by **breaking** them. Christians can **enjoy** life **without** arguing, and fighting, and over-indulging. And hopefully, that attitude stays with us at **all** times. Always keep God's commandments in mind, so that **whatever** we do, it may be done to God's glory. Practice those **Three Ways To Worship The Trinity** - keep His commandments in **your** hearts, teach them to your **children**, and show them to **others** by your example in society. Amen.