

Sermon 1808

John 16.12-15

June 12, 2022

Sports has changed a lot since I was a kid. The NFL season used to be twelve weeks and there was no Super Bowl. There was no indoor football, no televised soccer. Lacrosse was a town in Wisconsin, not a prep sport. And, before Title IX there were no girls' sports, not in high school, anyway, and a precious few in college.

But one thing has remained unchanged—professional wrestling! Hulk Hogan, Dusty Rhodes, Andre the Giant, Roddy Piper. One of my grade school classmates went into it—for a while. The pile driver, the figure four leg lock, the, oh, I don't know what it was, but the announcer always said, "Banned in five states, should be banned in them all!" But without a doubt the tag team matches were my favorite and how I loved it, when, as my duo was getting dusted, an ally walked into the arena, got up in their corner and jumped off the ropes into the ring. Triple-team! Oh, the glory, oh, the mayhem, oh, the schlock! My guys were going to win! Hey, I grew up in a small town and on a Saturday night this was as good as it got for a kid in Junior High!

I mention all this because we have a triple-team on our side. This is really as good as it gets!

#### Triple-Teamed for Life

1. The Son speaks the words of life (12).
2. The Spirit guides in all truth (13-14)
3. As the Father planned (15).

The time for Jesus' departure was near. Later that night he would be betrayed into the hands of sinners. He had already taught them much their last evening together. He had washed their feet, instituted the Lord's Supper, given them the command to love one another as he had loved them, spoke about the vine and the branches, the hatred of the world, oh, and warned them of their impending desertion of him later in the evening. Jesus had much more to tell them, but it would be like pouring a third cup of water into a two cup glass.

"I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear (12)."

Did you have a "red letter" Bible? I did. My confirmation Bible. All the words of Jesus were in red letters. So, the conversation with the thief on the cross would look like this. "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." That would be in normal, black letters. But then came the important stuff, the red letters of what Jesus said. "I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in Paradise." There is a problem with a Bible like that, no matter how well-intentioned it is. It gives the impression that only the red lettered verses are the important ones, that Jesus only spoke the red letter words.

Oh, the sinful human nature, egged on by that Ph.D. in theology, Lucifer himself, would love to have it this way. We love Jesus. Jesus is our Lord. But if Jesus did not say it, well. We love Jesus. Jesus is our Lord.

So the words of Moses drop by the wayside, as if Moses came up with the Ten Commandments out of his own head. The words of Paul are brushed aside—the product of a biased man living in an unenlightened age. I really don't have to go into it much further. We all remember not paying attention to Mom because she wasn't Dad. Jesus didn't speak about abortion, drugs, homosexuality, war, racism based on the color of your skin. So we can't make any judgments about these things! How quickly we can move over to the express lane to hell with our situational ethics! Good is what I determine! I only go by the real words of Jesus.

When we think like that, God's judgment is already upon us. How can so many lives be lost to gun violence in the most powerful nation in the world in a time of peace? How can so many lives be thrown away through overdoses in a time of unfettered entertainment and social connectivity? One, certainly one, among the many causes for untimely deaths in America is we don't pray enough. We don't believe enough. We don't follow the Lord enough.

Yet Jesus still speaks to us through the Bible, all of it. We have the echoes of his words and actions in the New Testament Epistles, the applications of what Jesus said. We have the storm front of Jesus approaching in in the Old Testament. He has the words of life. Faith in Jesus gives us this life, eternal life, through the forgiveness of sins. Faith in Jesus puts us back in a right relationship with God. Abraham discovered that. God credited his faith to him as righteousness (Genesis 15.6). David learned that when he confessed and God forgave the iniquity of his sin. Peter was finally convinced of it when Jesus told him to "Feed my lambs."

Jesus speaks to you and me today. All who believe and are baptized will be saved. Never will I leave you, never will I forsake you. Come unto me all you who are weary and burdened and I will give you rest.

The Son speaks the words of life. We are triple-teamed for life. Jesus is the lead-off. He is followed by the Holy Spirit. The Spirit guides in all truth.

"But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. He will bring glory to me by taking from what is mine and making it known to you (13-14)."

This alone proves my previous point. Everything the Holy Spirit reveals in the Bible is from Jesus, the Word who made his dwelling among us.

The Holy Spirit would rehearse the sayings and deeds of Jesus with the all the disciples as they travelled throughout the world telling people the stories about Jesus. The Holy Spirit would carry certain of them as they would sit down in the

last years of their lives and write the story of Jesus in the Gospels. The Spirit would guide the Apostle Paul to share this or that aspect of Jesus' work in response to the issues that emerged in the congregations he started. It was all Jesus' words, but the Holy Spirit guided them.

It is interesting to note that, once the Holy Spirit came in power on the disciples, they no longer entertained false ideas. When Jesus was with them, a third of his teachings were in response to their false ideas! They think a man was born blind as punishment from God for the sins of his parents! They think Samaritans are beneath talking to. They think Jesus is going to set up an earthly kingdom with them as his vice presidents. After the day of Pentecost, none of these false teachings found expression in the words of the disciples. The Spirit was an unfailing guide in the truth.

The Spirit still is. I think of the reading from a few weeks ago. How do we resist temptation? The sword of the Spirit, the word of truth—that's the Bible as the Holy Spirit builds us up in our knowledge and trust of God. And pray in the Spirit on all occasions. Prayer, which the Holy Spirit brings before God, editing and polishing it so that it is the most eloquent and polished request God the Father has ever seen. How can he not answer it with a "yes" or even giving us more than what we asked for?

Triple-teamed for life. The lead and second have done their job. Now it's time for the closer. As the Father planned.

"All that belongs to the Father is mine. That is why I said the Spirit will take from what is mine and make it known to you (15)."

Sometimes I wonder why some teams win the championship in their sport although they do not have the best players. The reverse question is how can some teams loaded with talent not even make the playoffs or the post-season? Those in the know will usually tell you if it isn't injuries—that's my excuse for the Golden Knights—it is squabbling in the locker room, selfishness during the game and constant distractions as stars focus on obscene ad contracts selling everything from shoes to shineola. Nobody has an overriding plan higher than, "I got mine!"

That's not the triple-team threat of the Triune God. God the Father has it all planned out. All the parts work perfectly together, you might say indistinguishable from each other. The same plan of saving mankind from their sins that God the Father came up with, that's the plan the Son of God signed up for and that's the same plan the Holy Spirit was happy to push. The Father glorifies the Son by raising him from the dead and lifting him up to heaven. The Son glorifies the Father by revealing his saving love and purpose. They both give glory to the Holy Spirit as those he converts through the Word are received into the family of God in time and into the halls of heaven in eternity.

On a team of the biggest egos in the universe, there are no ego problems. Father, Son and Holy Spirit work tirelessly, seamlessly, lovingly for our rescue from sin and entrance into heaven.

Looking back at some of my analogies, I have to make a few corrections before I say “Amen.” We believe in the Triune God, the God-the-Father-God-the-Son-and-God-the-Holy-Spirit-God. There are not three Gods, like there would be three wrestlers in a three-way tag team match. There is only one God. I cannot figure that out, but that is what the word of Jesus clearly tells us. The Lord our God, the Lord is one. Yet each person (let’s call them that), each person is real. It is not one God playing three roles, like an actor playing the hero and the villainous twin brother and the bewildered grandfather. The Father is the Father, the Son is the Son and the Holy Spirit is the Holy Spirit. There is no confusing them. They each have personality, will and purpose. You can anger each of them and you can please all of them. They are not limited, like the Son being only one-third God. No, each really and fully is completely God. The Father is God, the Son is God and the Spirit is God. That’s what the Bible says. That is the Christian faith. Any group that doesn’t believe in the Triune God is not Christian, no matter how much they stomp and yell.

So it goes without saying that, since the Father, Son and Spirit are God, we honor and worship the persons of the Holy Trinity equally. Prayers to one are prayers to all. Jesus will forward our requests to the Father. The Holy Spirit will confer with the Son about our petition. And if we think we can make friends with the world, which wants to have everybody believing in a lowest common denominator god, we are not going to be friends with the Triune God. Anyone who is ashamed to mention Jesus in the same breath with our Father in heaven, Jesus will be ashamed of him when he comes in his glory. And whatever adjective you use for one person of the Trinity, you can use for the other—holy, perfect, present everywhere, omnipotent, omniscient.

But isn’t that what you would expect from our triple-team God? If the world, the devil and our sinful human nature could figure the Triune God out, they could also figure out the weak spots, like army engineers tearing apart captured enemy equipment to find out its vulnerabilities. Our Triune God has no vulnerabilities. He transcends our understanding.

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I don’t watch wrestling any longer. I have stuff to do on a Saturday night, so I can hit the sack early and be ready for Sunday worship. But in a world of change, this remains unchanging: we have the Triune God on our side and always will.