

**God For Us**  
Holy Trinity  
John 8:48-59

Last Wednesday morning around 10am I do what I typically do. I walked out of my office, shut the light off, closed the door behind me and walked downstairs for the Wednesday morning Bible Study with my coffee cup in hand. Yet, this past Wednesday morning Bible Study did not begin as it always does. It began with this question from one of the parishioners, “Pastor, do you think God had a greater purpose for allowing those twenty-four people to die in the tornado this past Monday?” Well, that’s the kind of question that causes a Pastor to put his coffee cup down and think a little bit before answering.

The next day as I was scanning the websites of some major national newspapers I came across this article titled, “Is Our Suffering God’s Will?” National tragedies like the one this past Monday in which an EF-5 tornado hit Moore, OK and its elementary school square on starts these kinds of conversations and brings to the surface once again these kinds of questions. *They are conversations and questions that are interested in the mysterious character and will of God.*

Today is Trinity Sunday in the Church year. We give praise and honor to our Triune God. Appropriately, considering the tragic event that occurred this past week, today is also the day *that we have a conversation and ask questions about the mysterious character of our Triune God.* We used the Athanasian Creed before the sermon as a conversation starter.

Our Bible readings this morning also probe into the mysterious character and will of God. In our reading from Proverbs King Solomon tells us that God alone possess all eternal wisdom even before the acts of creation. In our Gospel reading we learn that Jesus is the one who has always existed even before the beginning of creation as he says emphatically to the skeptic Jewish religious leaders, “Before Abraham was, I am” (Jn 8:58). And so we dive this day into the character of our Triune God.

At the Seminary I can remember one particular class in which we had a *conversation and asked questions that tap into the mysterious character of our God as a Triune God.* We had deep theological conversations and asked many questions of the professor. We talked about how there are two ways to view the Trinity. You can talk about how the Godhead *relates to himself* in the three persons like we did a little bit with the Athanasian Creed this morning. You can also talk about how the Godhead *relates to us* in the three persons. In the midst of this whole formal, classroom conversation I looked down at my desk and stared for a moment at the cover of one of the books that we were required to read on the teaching of the Trinity. I stared at the title of this book and everything all of a sudden became very clear to me. The title is just three simple, yet very comforting words: *God for Us.*

Brothers and sisters in Christ, when it comes to the teaching of the Trinity, this is all that matters—*God for us.* Now, I am not trying to dismiss the importance of asking questions and having conversations that probe into the mystery of the Trinity. I am not trying to be insensitive and marginalize the questions and conversations about the character of God and his Will that take place after national tragedies. But if at some point we do not come back to this truth that the God of

the Bible, the Triune God of Christianity, is our one God in three persons who is *for us*, then we will not have the comfort and assurance our God wants us to have.

Last week we celebrated the Day of Pentecost here on Sunday morning. We spent some time looking at St. Peter's Pentecost sermon in Acts, chapter two. This morning we heard some more from Peter's sermon. Peter speaks loudly and clearly to the people and says, "This Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men. God raised him up, loosing the pangs of death, because it was not possible for him to be held by it" (Acts 2:23-24). *God for us!* Peter knew it and preached it boldly and courageously. Our Triune God comes to us and for us *in human history* through the suffering and death of Christ to redeem a broken, sinful world. And in the process this mysterious God comes to rescue you, forgive your sins, and bring you into participation in his entire plan of redeeming the world he created. This God who is the creator of the entire universe and whose ways and will is higher than ours has had regard even for you. He has come to bring to you the *peace that surpasses all human understanding, the comfort that comforts us in every affliction* (2 Cor 1:3-4), and *a hope in Christ that is unshaken* (2 Cor 3:7). *God for us!*

When a tornado slams directly into an Elementary school and levels a town it can be difficult to believe and trust firmly that God is for us. On the contrary, it may feel like he is against us. It may feel like he is punishing a particular group of people or maybe our nation as a whole. It may not feel like our God is a very loving God. In these moments it is appropriate to remember that our God is *not* a tame God. He is mysterious. His ways are higher and the entirety of his Will is unknown. But this same un-tame, mysterious, high and holy God has made himself known. He has revealed himself for us in the great unconditional, sacrificial love of Christ. We live in hope by grace through faith in our God who is known and has revealed himself for us. As Jesus says in the Gospel reading, "Truly, truly, I say to you, if anyone keeps my word, he will never see death" (Jn 8:51). By knowing our God in Christ and keeping his promised Word in faith we grow in the certainty of our hope of life forever with him.

St. Paul wrote in the eighth chapter of his letter to the Christians in Rome, "If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things" (Rom 8:31-32)? St. Paul's words are applicable for us even today in this time and in this place.

St. Paul says elsewhere in his second letter to the Corinthians, "Five times I received at the hands of the Jews forty lashes less one. Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I was stoned. Three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I was adrift at sea; on frequent journeys, in danger from rivers, danger from false brothers; in toil and hardship, through many a sleepless night, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure. And, apart from other things, there is the daily pressure on me of my anxiety for all the churches" (2 Cor 11:24-28). This man, of all men, could levy a charge and file a lawsuit against God. Yet, he chose instead to take it as a given and trust firmly that God is for us. He chose instead to say, "When I am weak, then I am strong" (2 Cor 12:10).

Conversations and questions that seek only to tap into and inquire of the hidden Will and unknown ways of God will always end up with an un-tame God who is against us. Only in Christ does our Triune God come *for us* and for our salvation to deliver that certain promise: "If anyone keeps my word, he will never see death" (Jn 8:51). Amen.