

We are now in the Sunday after Pentecost and we are focussing on the theme of "God the Holy Trinity." How do we understand the three persons of the Trinity? It took the early church nearly 300 years to complete the wording of *Trinitarian Orthodoxy* producing the Nicene Creed which we sing every Sunday morning. The Nicene Creed was first adopted in the city of *Nicaea*, present day *Iznik* in Turkey by the first council in Nicaea in 325 AD. This Creed as a statement of faith is accepted as authoritative by the Roman Catholics, Eastern Orthodox, Anglican churches, CNI and other major Protestant churches.

The Nicene Creed was originally written in Greek and was liturgically used in the context of the Eucharist in the West and in the context of both baptism and Eucharist in the East. This morning I would like us to look at some of the key characteristic features of the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit.

**The Father:** - In the Nicene Creed we begin by saying that we believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, of all things visible and invisible. In this section we acknowledge that God is indeed the Creator of the world and he is in control of everything. In the Old Testament reading from the book of Isaiah the prophet sees the Lord seated on a throne high and exalted, and the train of his robe filled the temple. What we see here is a glimpse of the Father in all his glory, he is seated on the throne and he is exalted and just the hem of his garment fills the entire temple. Everything that Isaiah sees overwhelms him. He is just awed by the majesty of God. He sees the Lord high and exalted. In other words we are told that the centre of power is the Lord God Almighty who is seated on the throne. As Isaiah sees that, he hears the seraphim calling to one another, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty! The whole earth is full of his glory." Isaiah is revealed the holiness of God. The holiness of God is supremely the truth about God. It is his total and unique moral majesty, and Isaiah encounters this God in all his holiness. In Isaiah's context, we see that he is reminded that the future of Israel is in the hands of the God who does battle and the hosts belong to him. We too are reminded this morning that the Father who is seated on the throne is all powerful and all sufficient for us no matter what our context is. This is our greatest reassurance. The Father is powerful and sufficient for all our needs. When Isaiah is confronted with the stunning holiness of God he immediately says, "Woe to me! I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people man of unclean lips and my eyes have seen the King, the Lord Almighty." Isaiah is undone by the stunning holiness of God as he enters into God's presence. He realises his own sinfulness even as he thinks about the way that he has used to his tongue. We too are called to examine ourselves and how we use our lips. Do our lips praise God on one side and curse people who offend us on the other side? Do we slander and gossip about others? If so, we are to come before God and seek his forgiveness. In Isaiah's case after his confession, a seraph flew with a live coal in his hand which he had taken with tongs from the altar. With it he touched Isaiah's mouth and said, "See, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away and your sin atoned for." God had forgiven Isaiah because of the altar. Likewise, Jesus forgives us because he has paid the price for our sins. So as we come into the Father's presence we are to see him as the Creator, the sovereign King who is on the throne and a God who is Holy, Holy, Holy. May we take encouragement that he is in control of our situations and is the one who makes us holy.

**Jesus Christ:** - In the Creed we also confess about believing in Jesus Christ, only begotten Son of God who was there with the Father from the beginning. He is truly God, truly light, who is equal in substance to the Father and worked with the Father in the act of creation. He was sent by the Father to come as a human being, to suffer and die and then rise again on the third day. He has ascended into heaven and will come back again. In John's gospel chapter 16, Jesus says that he is going back to the Father and that he will send the advocate to be with us forever. In chapter 14 John says that whoever believes in Jesus will do the works that he has been doing and will also do greater things than these which Jesus did because he was going to the Father. Jesus came into the world to reveal God to us and to reconcile humanity to him. Jesus has gone back to the Father and has promised his followers that they could ask anything in his name and he would do it so that the Father's name may be glorified through the Son. Jesus has paved the way for the redemption of each one of us but we are to appropriate it individually. Thirdly, Jesus promised us the gift of the Holy Spirit. He is the third person of the Trinity. He is a person and not just a power. He is known as the *Paraclete* the advocate or the intercessor. In heaven Jesus is our *Paraclete* and here on earth the Holy Spirit is our *Paraclete*. He resides within us and pleads our case before God. He supports and encourages us in the midst of a hostile world. The world cannot see the activity of the Spirit because it has rejected the revelation of Jesus and the consequent blindness which is the judgement of God.

The Spirit of God is given to us to empower us so that we may truly walk in the paths of truth and holiness. May we on this Trinity Sunday be conscious of the Father's holiness and sovereignty, the Son's redemption and the Spirit's empowering in our lives.