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Text: John 3:1-17
Trinity

The Festival of the Holy

WHO IS GOD?

Who is God? From the beginning of time people have pondered this question.

Who is God? It is always interesting to hear what children have to say. When six year old Morgan was asked this question, he answered, "He's a man up in the sky. He chucks down all the water and it rains." Six year old Leona said that God is "a nice person who will like you. He has a cloak and long hair, a beard and short trousers."

What do you think? How would you answer the question: who is God?

The early Christians were faced with questions about God, especially as they tried to speak to others about Christ. They thought long and hard about Jesus and God and the Holy Spirit. They studied the Scriptures. They remembered what Jesus had said and done. And they tried to express in an intelligible way what they had experienced personally.

Over the years they developed statements of what they believed about God. These statements were called creeds, which comes from the Latin word *credo*, meaning "I believe." Creeds are statements of belief about God. Three of these creeds were circulated widely and were recognized as authoritative statements of faith for the church - the Apostles Creed, the Nicene Creed, and the Athanasian Creed.

Creeds were used in many ways: as a public statement of faith at the time of baptism when a person became a Christian, as part of the liturgy in worship, as an explanation of the Christian faith for those

who were not Christians. At the heart of the creeds, though, is this question, “who is God?”

All three creeds describe God as Trinity. The word “*trinity*” was first used by Tertullian, a church leader from Africa who was born in the year 150 AD. You can search the Bible from cover to cover and not find the word “*trinity*.” The church, however, found this to be a useful word in describing God. The word “*trinity*” comes from two words: *tri* - meaning three, and *unity* - meaning one. We know God as Trinity, as Father, as Son, as Holy Spirit. Three expressions of God - yet only one God.

The word “*trinity*” seeks to express what the Bible teaches about God. And yet we have to admit, the concept of the trinity doesn’t answer all our questions about God. There still is so much more to God. Our human minds are just not able to comprehend God. And so we ask, “who is God?”

Fortunately, the church has shown great wisdom in choosing the Gospel reading for the Festival of the Holy Trinity. The reading from John 3 is a story about a man who had questions about God. He was a religious man, a well educated person. Nicodemus came to Jesus at night with questions. He was trying to understand God and the ways of God.

And what did Jesus do? Did Jesus engage him in a philosophical discussion about God? Did Jesus elaborate upon the subtleties of God’s nature? No. Jesus pointed Nicodemus to the cross. He said to Nicodemus, “*And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.*” Then he told Nicodemus what Nicodemus really needed to know about God, and what you and I really need to know as well: “*For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.*”

Who is God? Let’s start with love. “*For God so loved the world!*” That’s what we really need to know about God. God is love. And God acts upon that love. That’s why for us, the cross is the key to

understanding God. When we look at the cross we get our clearest picture of God. There on the cross is our God, identifying with us, standing in solidarity with us, sacrificing for us, suffering for us, loving us. That's who God is. God is love.

What we know about God starts at the cross. The cross helps us to see that God is like a loving parent who has made us and who takes care of us. The cross helps us to see that God so very much wants to be intimately involved in our lives that God takes on our flesh and blood. The cross helps us to see that God wants to give a new spirit to us, the very Spirit of God. The cross helps us to see that God is Trinity, that the one God loves us as Father, as Son, as Holy Spirit.

Yes, there is so much more to God than we will ever know. But this we do know, God is love. Who is God? *“God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.”* That's what you need to know. God so loves YOU that he gave his only Son, so that YOU may believe in him and not perish, but have eternal life.