

The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit

DARRELL DELANEY

In the 5th Century, during his later years, St. Augustine wrote on the Trinity, saying: For in the Trinity alone is the highest and most perfect unity. This writing remains one of his most significant theological contributions to understanding the Trinity. In this episode of *Groundwork*, we are going to talk about each aspect of the Trinity: The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit; as well as how to live and worship in light of our triune God. Stay tuned.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Welcome to *Groundwork*, where we dig into scripture to lay the foundation for our lives. I am Scott Hoezee.

DARRELL DELANEY

And I am Darrell Delaney; and Scott, we are in the second of our three-part series on the doctrine of the Trinity; trinity being the threeness and the oneness of God; and we talked about where that comes from in the Old Testament and in the New Testament in the first episode, as well as Church history; and in this episode today, we are just going to take a deeper dive and understand each aspect in the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And joining us again for today's conversation, as for this entire series, is Dr. Sue Rozeboom, who is the Professor of Liturgical Theology at Western Theological Seminary in Holland, Michigan. Welcome back, Sue.

SUE ROZEBOOM

Thank you.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Well, let's begin. We are going to do Father in the first segment; Son in the second, of course; and Spirit in the third; very orderly; and we want to start with Father, therefore, Darrell. The Apostles Creed confirms our belief in God the Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth; and indeed, we do believe...we ultimately believe all three Persons of the Trinity were involved in the Creation. We will get to that; but, you know, it begins in the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, and that sort of is where the Apostles Creed starts.

DARRELL DELANEY

So, we know the Apostles Creed is not the apostles who actually said these things, but it is like a collection of teachings that centered around what they lived and how they lived, and that passed on as tradition that we often confess in our churches today. It talks about how God is the Creator of heaven and earth. We know that the earth is the Lord's and everything in it...Psalm 24. The idea and the concept of father is very important. You alluded to this in the first episode of the fatherhood of God the Father; and we know it is not just merely a title, but it is actually encompassing the character of our divine God.

SUE ROZEBOOM

Indeed; one of my favorite psalms is Psalm 103, where David, as the psalmist, is reflecting on God's attributes. In the midst of that, it says, you know, God attends to us like a good parent—like a father—tenderly; and remembers how we were made; remembers that we are dust; and being that fragile, God attends to us, just so.

SCOTT HOEZEE

So, the Old Testament...the people who wrote the Old Testament, anyway, even under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, didn't have a conception of a Father separate from a Son separate from a Holy Spirit; but they definitely did...as you just said there, Sue, with Psalm 103...they talked about the fatherly *nature* of God—their one God: Deuteronomy 1:31: There you saw how the Lord your God carried you, as a father carries his son, all the way [you went] until you reached this place.

Or Psalm 68:5: Who is God? He is a father to the fatherless, a defender of widows, is God in his holy dwelling.

So, this idea that God is *fatherly* is all over the Old Testament.

DARRELL DELANEY

You know, it is really beautiful, at that point, particularly speaking, for those who have come from situations in broken homes, where the father may not have been as present, or they have not had a father in the picture...the father passed away; and our heavenly Father picture here is designed to be encouraging and allow people to know that he can care for us, he can provide for us; and that is actually what he has been doing our whole lives anyway. Even in the midst of trials and even in the midst of challenges, we see that; and those scriptures are something that people can hold onto for hope and promise.

SUE ROZEBOOM

And that gets reinforced in the New Testament; most certainly in the way that Jesus refers to God as Jesus' own Father; and this is introducing something of a revolutionary understanding of God's intimate relationship with those who follow him. We mentioned it earlier, but the Lord's Prayer: Jesus is asked by his disciples: Teach us to pray. Other disciples have their rabbis teach them; you teach us. And so, the first thing Jesus says is to address God as our Father in heaven; and to me, that is pretty striking, first because of the invitation to call God Father, but then also the fact that this is *our*. Jesus is not inviting us to think individualistically here, but to recognize that all who identify God as God, are somehow together in that.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Exactly; and as a father, he loves us, his children; he cares for us, as we just read a moment ago: He carries you in his arms like a father carries his son. But, in the Bible, too, as in Hebrews 12:5-11, as a Father, he sometimes disciplines his children, too. He has to correct us, right? He wants us to live in ways that we will flourish, following God's law. So, as a Father, he guides us; rebukes us if need be; corrects us and sets us back on a level path. You know, it is like in Psalm 32:8:

I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you with my loving eye on you. So, Darrell and Sue, there are those aspects of father in the Bible as well.

DARRELL DELANEY

So, God says, you know, if you endure hardship it is good discipline, and no father who loves his son will allow him to go undisciplined; and so, that is part of his aspect is his provision, his care, his actual discipline and guidance; but also, you know, we understand that these things...they transform our worship, in the way we live, because we know we can approach God the Father with humility; we can actually come to him intimately, and we can be honest about how we feel, knowing that he is covering us and cares for us.

SUE ROZEBOOM

It seems to me that that is one of the extraordinary gifts of the rhythm of weekly worship; that is to say, God...not least because God is our Father, the one who created us, who knows us intimately; in fact, God

knows us better than we know ourselves...God knows, and God draws us to God's self; and God, in fact, somehow, profoundly, mysteriously, also is at work by the Spirit to prompt us to respond, that we might approach God with reverence, yes, but also with gratitude, and with that sense of: God is drawing me into an intimate relationship, that I might know him as the one who tenderly cares...cares for me like a parent.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Yes; so, we were noting earlier that there is, in the Old Testament, a sense that God is father-like, but most Israelites, who were so afraid of taking God's name in vain, they actually never said the word *Yahweh*...they couldn't quite imagine saying: Hey, Dad; hello, Father, in a prayer, right? Or Abba, Father...

DARRELL DELANEY

Right.

SCOTT HOEZEE

As Paul would write about in Romans 8. Daddy...Father...that would never have occurred to the Israelites as being a reverential way to come to God; but because of what Jesus revealed to us, that is what Jesus *commands* us to do.

DARRELL DELANEY

He has given us an opportunity to have a new relationship with him; and in just a moment, we are going to talk about the aspect of the concept of God the Son, so stay tuned.

Segment 2

SCOTT HOEZEE

You are listening to *Groundwork*, where we dig into scripture to lay the foundation for our lives. I am Scott Hoezee.

DARRELL DELANEY

And I am Darrell Delaney.

SUE ROZEBOOM

And I am Sue Rozeboom.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And we are continuing our journey into the doctrine of the Trinity, focusing first on the Father, which we just did, and now we focus, Sue, on the work of God the Son, Jesus Christ.

SUE ROZEBOOM

Yes; as Christians, understanding the nature and role of Jesus is fundamental to our faith, and to our daily walk. Scripture paints for us a rich tapestry of Christ's identity. We receive that he is the eternal Son of God, and as the Son of God, the promised Messiah—the one who would come to make all things new. Yes, in our humanity, but indeed, all creation.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And it is important to remember, Sue and Darrell, there was a time when Jesus, the Son of God, was not human. He took on humanity in the womb of Mary; and so, there was a time when there was a Son of God who wasn't also human, but there was never a time, or in the time before time, when there wasn't a Son of God. As we mentioned in the last program, the Nicene Creed makes it clear he is begotten, but begottenness does not have before and after. Begottenness...being the Son of God...is an eternal trait; and so, although Jesus of Nazareth came into existence when Mary gave birth to him in a barn, the *divine* Person who was in that Jesus of Nazareth had always existed. This is the pre-existence of the son of God. He had always existed. We get that in John 1:

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ²He was with God in the beginning. ³Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made.

DARRELL DELANEY

You see how that word *word* is capitalized, Scott and Sue. You see that that word, the *logos*, that is the communicative and creative aspect of God that came into being. So, the eternal Son of God who you just mentioned and who had no birthdate, decided to come into the world, becoming flesh and dwelling among us, jumped into Jesus Christ and had a birthday, right? So, the Son, before that, was eternally existent, and yet, decided to enter into human context and live here; and then, it says in Colossians 2:9:

For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form.

Paul wanted to make sure that they did not shortchange the aspect of the Son being fully divine and the aspect of Christianity with Jesus as a human being. So, one hundred percent divine, one hundred percent human.

SUE ROZEBOOM

It is truly significant that Jesus is fully divine and fully human. This is another one of those mysteries that we simply cannot comprehend; but by the Spirit, we give ourselves over to it, recognizing that, if Jesus were not fully divine and Jesus were not fully human...fully identifying with those who had regrettably rejected God's grace and communion, then the reconciliation couldn't happen; it couldn't work.

The other thing that is so significant about Jesus identifying with us is that Jesus identifies with us so, not just in our humanity, but earlier we had read about Jesus' baptism, and even that is a mysterious and profound event. Why would Jesus, who is presumably sinless...why would Jesus need to be baptized? And yet, here is Jesus humbling himself and identifying with us as sinners in order that we as sinners might be identified with him; and therefore, reconciled with God.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And just to do a little geeky theology here...and this will get us into some of the Athanasian Creed that we looked at a little bit of in the previous program in this Trinity series...it is very important to say that Jesus is not two different persons with one nature each. No.

SUE ROZEBOOM

Right.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Nor is he a third something or another, like God took divine nature, human nature, put them in a blender, made a frappe, and now Jesus is a third something or another—neither fully divine nor fully human; no, he is both. He has divinity and humanity up and running fully within his one, single Person, and that is very, very important. As you were just saying, Sue and Darrell, he needed both fully to identify with us sinners and fully to get us *out* of the sinful mess that we cannot get ourselves out of; and in the course of that, Sue and Darrell, Jesus also identified with us in more ways than one. He wasn't only fully human, he had full human experiences.

SUE ROZEBOOM

Yes; so, I think the writer of the sermons in Hebrews captures this in saying: ^{4:15}For we do not have a high priest... (namely Jesus) ... we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin. ¹⁶Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.

DARRELL DELANEY

I think it beautiful that the writer of the epistle to the Hebrews names this. I mean, just thinking about how we struggle. If we only had the divine aspect of Jesus, the Son of God, then there is no way we could relate; there is no way we could live perfectly; there is no way we could figure out how to do this life; but because

of his humanity, he is able to understand our temptation; he is able to understand our weakness; and we have someone who has gone before us and says...Jesus is the only one who can say: I know what you are going through. He is the only one who can say: I understand, and I have provided you with the opportunity to: 1) Connect with you; 2) Encourage you in your context.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Exactly; C. S. Lewis once said that nobody understands the full force of temptation better than the one who always resisted it; who never gave in. If you give in now and then, you don't really know how hard it is to resist. Jesus is the only realist, C. S. Lewis said, because he was tempted every day, never gave an inch. He understands what we go through, and he knows why we sometimes fail, because we don't have his advantage of being divine. But of course, Jesus is also the ultimate humble one, right? When we think of the Son of God, we think of Paul's words in Philippians 2, in which he says:

⁵In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus: ⁶Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; ⁷rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. ⁸And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even the death on a cross!

SUE ROZEBOOM

And again, there we experience that radical way in which Jesus fully identifies with us, in order that we might be identified with him; and therefore, enjoy the benefits of rich communion with God; reconciliation with God; and hope for the making of all things new—all creation, but also even the deep wells of darkness in our hearts.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Exactly; exactly; and of course, you know, he did all of this as a sheer gift of grace. Romans 5:8: God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

God did not wait for us to achieve a certain level of morality and then said: Now, you deserve to get the Son. No; he knew we were lost, and he gave us the Son anyway.

DARRELL DELANEY

It's a beautiful thing; and because, not only that, he gives us the opportunity to practice what he practiced: The humility, the servanthood, the sacrificial love; and by his Spirit, we can accomplish those things to serve one another.

Coming up in the final segment, we want to explore the aspects of the ministry of the Holy Spirit, and talk about how it affects our lives of worship. So, stay tuned.

Segment 3

SCOTT HOEZEE

I am Scott Hoezee, along with Darrell Delaney and Sue Rozeboom, and you are listening to *Groundwork*, and this final segment of a second episode in a series on the doctrine of the Trinity. We have been looking at each of the three Persons in turn, and we have one left, and that is the Holy Spirit, who is a vital force in the life of every believer, and that, Sue, has a ton of implications for our daily living and worship.

SUE ROZEBOOM

Yes, it does; and that inclines me to recall that trinitarian blessing that I referred to in the previous program: May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Now, think about that. That is not a doctrinal teaching. That is not heady instruction that we are getting. We are getting an invitation to an experience; the experience of Christ's grace; the experience of God's love; and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit; but what is so radical here is, you cannot know Christ's grace or God's love apart from the work of the Holy Spirit, who actually manifests it to us; and inclines us to experience it. There is something of a fellowship with respect to the Trinity itself: Father, Son and Spirit; three Persons; and yet, indistinct in essence. We cannot comprehend that.

There are some theologians who like to play with this term *perichoresis*, which is a Greek word. Peri means around, and choresis...you maybe can hear the word choreography there...choresis refers to something dancelike. So, it is as if the three members of the Trinity are in this profound, eternal dance; but now, the Holy Spirit is the one who unites us to Christ and invites us into that dance—into an experience of that dance; and I think that is what the Apostle Paul was inviting us to receive with that blessing.

SCOTT HOEZEE

You know, in the Western Church, we usually think of the Trinity as represented by a triangle, but in the Eastern Orthodox Church, it is a circle. It is a circle because it is that dance...that dance of love, Darrell, that they are just constantly engaging in with all three of them together.

DARRELL DELANEY

Yes; in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was formless and void; and in Genesis 1:2 it says: The earth was formless and empty, and darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters.

So, even in the beginning, in the creation standpoint, the Spirit is present and active and brooding over the chaos and foreshadowing what God is going to do when he transforms, not only the world that he is going to make, but in the lives and hearts of every believer.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Yes; the New Testament expands on Genesis 1. We realize all three Persons of the Trinity were involved. The Father superintended the creation; the Son of God was the Word who did all the speaking: Let there be light; the Holy Spirit was the active power that executed all of what the Son did and the Father authorized. So, you have this triune, act of creation.

Sue, I liked what you said a minute ago. You know, there is a line in the Nicene Creed, which might seem confusing. It says: And we believe in the Holy Spirit; the Lord, the giver of life. Except we usually think of Jesus as Lord, and not the Holy Spirit as Lord; and yet, I think what you were saying, Sue, is our only connection...living connection to Jesus as Lord, is the Spirit. So, we have said the three Persons of the Trinity...they are always working in tandem; they are always having that dance of unity and so forth; but they do have distinctive things they do; and in the economy of salvation, as we sometimes call it, the Spirit, Sue, is the one who is the most active in the Church today in all kinds of different ways.

SUE ROZEBOOM

Indeed; and one of the things that the Spirit is vitally active in is our faith; and I will just say it: This blows my mind. So, the Spirit...we trust that the Spirit is the one who reveals to us what we are to believe. So, God was at work in delivering word by the Spirit, inspiring the writers of the Old Testament and the New Testament. So, God works through the Spirit through humanity to set forth for us scripture, from which, then, the Spirit inspires the apostles and the prophets and, now even today, missionaries and pastors, to receive that word; inspires us to receive that word...to apprehend that word...to interpret that word...to understand the relevance of that word for us today. But then, throughout history, the Spirit has been at work in the Church, helping us understand what the content of our faith is, right? So, what we are to believe: That God created all things; that Jesus is the one in whom all things are made new; that the Spirit is at work Christ and in our lives. So, that is all the stuff *that* we believe, and the Spirit has sustained that; but then, mystery of mysteries, the Spirit also has to be at work in order for us to have the faith that that is true. So, the faith *by* which we believe that that content of faith is true is also the Spirit's work. This is Paul's emphasis in Ephesians, where he says:

2:8 For it is by grace you have been saved—through faith...ah, but even faith is not of yourselves. That is a work of God, lest anyone could boast and say: Well, I mustered up more faith than you. No; it is the Spirit who is at work, giving us that gift of faith to recognize that God in Christ, by the Holy Spirit, is making all things new, including us.

SCOTT HOEZEE

When the Spirit of truth comes, Jesus said in John 16, he will guide you into all truth; and Darrell, another thing that the Holy Spirit is doing on a constant basis is showering the Church with gifts and with fruit.

DARRELL DELANEY

Yes; it is beautiful. I mean, Galatians 5 says: ²²The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Those gifts are given to us when the Spirit comes and then dwells in the believer's life and heart. Also, in 1 Corinthians it says you cannot say that Jesus is Lord except by the Spirit; and so, he actually gives us the gifts; and in Ephesians 4, it talks about how these gifts of prophet, apostle, evangelist, pastor, teacher are designed to build the Church so the Church may be built up, grown up, mature. So, he gives gifts so we may serve him, Scott.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Yes; and you know, one of the things we have emphasized before on *Groundwork* is that everybody has to bear all nine fruit of the Spirit. That is not a salad bar, right? We are supposed to bear all nine, but we don't all have the same gifts. Fruit are common to all; gifts are different. Some are gifted to be evangelists, some are gifted to have hospitality; some are gifted to, you know, etc., etc., but it is all the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is incessantly busy. The Spirit never stops.

DARRELL DELANEY

No; the Spirit doesn't stop, and the Spirit actually impacts how we live. He actually empowers the way we live so that we can live that transformed life. He also gives us an intimate relationship and spiritual growth that comes inside out, so that people can see our good deeds and glorify our Father in heaven; and of course, he is the glue that binds us together as believers, in Hebrews 10:25, when we don't forsake the believers...thus the assembly of the believers...the Spirit is the one who keeps us together. So, we are really excited about the fact that the doctrine of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit coming together is the oneness of God shown in the context of three Persons, and we are excited that we yield to the Spirit, the Father, and the Son in this way, so that we can love him. Thanks be to God.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Well, thank you for listening and digging deeply into scripture with *Groundwork*. We hope you will join us again next time as we conclude our study of the Holy Trinity by studying scripture that helps us recognize our triune God in our worship, prayers, and daily life.

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DARRELL DELANEY

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