

The Trinity in Worship, Prayer, and Daily Life

DARRELL DELANEY

In the bustling heart of a vibrant city, a small community gathers in a centuries-old church, raising their voice in harmonious worship that echoes through the stained-glass windows. As they bow their heads in prayer, seeking guidance and strength, their lives intertwine with the timeless truth of the doctrine of the Trinity. In this episode of *Groundwork*, we unravel the significance of this ancient, yet ever relevant doctrine in the tapestry of real life. 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 we are in the third part of our three-part series on the doctrine of the Trinity. It is really appropriate that we have three episodes in this series because of the Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit, and it just worked out that it was this three-part series; and we also have again with us 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, in the first episode, we looked at the biblical building blocks of where this doctrine of the Trinity comes from; in the second program, we spent one segment each on Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; and as you said in the opening a minute ago, Darrell, in this one, we want to see how an orthodox understanding of the Trinity informs how we worship, how we pray, and how we live; and we can start, Sue, with some reflections on trinitarian-shaped worship.

SUE ROZEBOOM

Well, I wonder if, in thinking about Christian worship, we could actually begin with the Great Commission in Matthew 28:19, where we receive that Jesus gives to his disciples...indeed, gives to us...this command...this invitation: Go; make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. And of course, where there are disciples, there will be worship. In many contexts, that worship is allowed to be communal; and in many contexts, unfortunately, it is not; and that is hard. But somehow, profoundly and mysteriously, by the work of the Holy Spirit, we are all one; and when any one congregation or person engages in the worship of God Triune, somehow, profoundly and mysteriously, we are not alone, but we are all one, together with all who are in Christ, worshipping God.

DARRELL DELANEY

It's a beautiful thing to know that we've got unity and we've got diversity in the Godhead personally, in the essence of the Godhead, but also that aspect pours out in the churches in every tribe, language, people and nation; and it shows also in the book of Revelation that way, where every tribe, language and nation, in Chapter 4:8, they say: Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty, who was, and is, and is to come.

We sing a lot of songs like that: Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty; God in three Persons, blessed Trinity; and the way we worship actually emphasizes the unity and diversity of the Godhead, because that can happen in different languages; that can happen in different countries; but we are united on our God.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Yes; the liturgical scholar, John Witvliet, defines worship as trinitarian, new covenant renewal.

SUE ROZEBOOM

Amen!

SCOTT HOEZEE

It is deeply trinitarian. We are renewing, you know, the new covenant in Christ's blood every time we come to worship. So, the Trinity, Sue, deeply, deeply informs the structure of our worship, the content of our worship, and engages us with the life of our triune God in worship.

SUE ROZEBOOM

Yes; and we renew, but only because God renews first, if I may put it that way. So, God is the one who gathers us for worship. God is the one who reaches out, if you will... and in fact, it is Irenaeus of Lyon, someone who lived hundreds of years ago, who said that God has effectively two hands, and with one hand God reaches out, and that hand is the Son; and then, having reached out to us, and reached us through the Son, by the Spirit, God, with that other hand, which is the Spirit...those hands meet; and now the Spirit, who is in us, reaches back, if you will, through the Son to the Father. And so, it is ultimately God who calls us to gather; and we respond, being prompted by the Spirit to, in fact, gather.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And Darrell, you shared with us something you often say at the beginning of worship, to frame worship in trinitarian ways, and you could maybe share that with us.

DARRELL DELANEY

I do; it is kind of a bookend because you are greeted in by the holy, triune God, and you are also blessed out and sent by the name of the holy, triune God; and so, in the beginning, I say something like: Holy Father, Creator of all; we adore you for your wisdom and majesty. Lord Jesus, Redeemer and Savior; we worship you for your sacrificial love and grace; and Holy Spirit, Comforter and guide, we magnify you for your presence and power among us. So, now we are inviting everyone into the fact that Christ, the Spirit, and the Father are *here*, and we are invited into their worship, because Jesus said it in his prayer: Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. They are already worshipping; and we have taught in our series on Revelation that the worship is actively happening now, and we are inviting people into it right now.

SCOTT HOEZEE

So, we often open with the Trinity; we close, you know, like a blessing from 2 Corinthians 13: (verse 14) The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

But Sue, another key aspect of worship, where we are really engulfed by the Trinity is Eucharist or the Lord's Supper or Holy Communion; and that involves all three Persons as well.

SUE ROZEBOOM

Indeed; but even the Lord's Supper is anticipated by rich movements that bring us to the table. So, I want to just reach back to those two movements. I mean, one is still with respect to the gathering. So, absolutely beautiful. Greet God's people with the blessing of the Trinity; invoke the presence of the members of the Trinity to move mightily in the midst of the gathered people. We cannot help but respond with praise, right? And being who we are, being not yet fully restored, not being given our full-throated and beautiful voices of the new creation, we cannot but make joyful noise; and yet, God receives that joyful noise; and part of the reason we raise a joyful noise, though, is because of just what we experience in this world: Hardship, our own failings, our own frustrations, with our lack of truly living as the disciple we would like to be; knowing

that many of our decisions are an affront to God's grace. We call that sin, right? And God says: Hey, you may not count yourself worthy to be here, but I have made you worthy in Christ; and I know you better than you know yourself. I know that you know all those things; and I am glad that you know...but come to me and unload...just unload that burden.

SCOTT HOEZEE

That is lovely; and again, it is what brings us to God and God to us; and I mentioned, too, a minute ago, the Lord's Supper or the Eucharist, or the Holy Communion, and in the Reformed tradition, of which the three of us are a part, there is a traditional thing that we say at the beginning of the Lord's Supper. We say: Lift up your hearts...

SUE ROZEBOOM

Yes.

SCOTT HOEZEE

We lift them up to the Lord, right? Why do we say that? Well, a lot of people don't know why we say that, but here is why: We believe that the Son of God, in his ascended power, is at the right hand of God the Father Almighty...

Sue Rozeboom/

DARRELL DELANEY

Right.

SCOTT HOEZEE

What happens at the Lord's Supper? Does the Lord come down to us? No; John Calvin was pretty sure that cannot happen.

DARRELL DELANEY

Right.

SCOTT HOEZEE

The Holy Spirit lifts us up to him. So, we are spiritually elevated to the right hand of the Father to commune in person with Jesus. So, even the very act of partaking of the body and blood of Jesus in the Lord's Supper is a profoundly triune thing that involves Father, Son and Holy Spirit; the Holy Spirit lifting our hearts into the very presence of God.

SUE ROZEBOOM

And often we anticipate our actual participation in the communion with a prayer...

DARRELL DELANEY

Yes.

SUE ROZEBOOM

And that prayer often takes...the form today...often takes the form of a great prayer of thanksgiving; and such a prayer has three movements, which is profoundly trinitarian; and it essentially ushers us through, from Creation to the New Creation, the redeeming work that God the Father is accomplishing through Christ the Son, by the fullness of the work of the Holy Spirit.

DARRELL DELANEY

It's a beautiful thing; and so, we have talked about how it affects... the concept of the Trinity affects our worship; but coming up next, we are going to talk about how the concept of the Trinity affects our prayer life. 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 as we think more about the doctrine of the Trinity, it has a lot of implications, Sue and Darrell, for our prayer life; and the trinitarian structure of, not only our prayers, but of how we believe prayer works; but as we get started here, let me just bounce something off both of you and let you react.

So, an acquaintance of mine...a friend of mine...has a habit in praying...and I have talked to this person about this, so I am not talking behind their back here...but I have said to this person: I am not sure that is *per se* a biblical way to pray. This person usually begins prayer by saying: Dear Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. So, he addresses the full Trinity and then off the prayer goes; and I have kind of pointed out that I don't really see that kind of prayer modeled in scripture, and it doesn't quite match how I view prayer. Any thoughts on that?

SUE ROZEBOOM

You know, that is a very interesting question. I think I have less trouble with addressing: Dear Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, provided that in the subsequent prayer, you remain mindful that you are talking to all of them; and then, I think that ought to impact the conclusion of the prayer; and since you are putting me on the spot, I kind of need to think about that a minute; but sometimes I hear prayers concluded: and we pray this in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, amen; which I actually find more confusing, if you will, or more troubling, or just more curious to me than addressing Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, because we are invited to pray to the Father *through* the Son in the power or in the grace of the Holy Spirit, right? And we pray in the name of Jesus; and Jesus says: Ask the Father anything in my name, Jesus says, and I will do it for you; but "*in my name*".

DARRELL DELANEY

So, I was thinking about that as well, Sue. There are different traditions that emphasize different aspects of the Godhead for traditional reasons. You know, where I was pastoring at Madison Square Church in Grand Rapids, Michigan, our pastor of Children's Ministries often prays: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, because she acknowledges the trinitarian presence of God. At the end of the prayer, we often pray in the name of Jesus because of John 17, when Jesus says; If you ask in my name I will do it. And so, ending a prayer in Jesus' name sounds appropriate to me and makes sense to me. I am not offended if they are acknowledging the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, but I want to make sure that Jesus is actually the one who is getting the main glory and attention there, because the Father is saying: Look at my Son; the Spirit is saying: Look at what Jesus is doing; and therefore, our focus is there; but the idea is, that Satan wouldn't ask you to pray to *any* of them; so, the idea is that we get to pray into the Godhead, and that invites us in. So, that is good.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Okay, I will leave my friend alone now. But I think that is important, and that is the one thing I always want to make sure of the subsequent prayer, right? We are invited to pray the Lord's Prayer to the Father, through the mediation of the Son. One of the things we believe is true of the doctrine of the ascension is that Jesus is the mediator. He is our go-between...

SUE ROZEBOOM

Right.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And it is the Holy Spirit who empowers our prayers and wings them to Jesus, who then brings them to the Father, and that is also why, traditionally, you conclude the prayer: for Jesus' sake, or: in Jesus' name; because he is the one who has invited us to pray to the Father, and the Spirit is the one who then wings that, too; but that has profound, Sue, implications for a lot of things in prayer.

SUE ROZEBOOM

It does, Scott, and one of the things that has been impressive to me of late is this promise...again, it is in the sermons that are addressed to the Hebrews, where one of the sermon writers says that we may approach the throne with boldness; that, as you said, Christ has ascended to the Father, and we believe that Christ has ascended, somehow, profoundly and mysteriously, in the flesh, right? But Christ is there; and then it says: Christ, who ever lives to intercede for us. So, it just blows my imagination, to give my imagination over to its imagination, to think about Christ...Christ himself...continually being present to us; that is, to the whole world and its need; but then, also to each one of us, profoundly, intimately, and bearing our concerns, interceding on our behalf to the Father; and then, elsewhere in Romans...Darrell, I think you alluded to this at one point, too...Paul says that: (8:26) the Spirit intercedes for us with sighs and groans beyond our understanding; and it just brings so much comfort to know that, as we had observed earlier of one theologian, that the doctrine of the Trinity is the Church's teaching about the radical nearness of God to us, and God has come near to us in Christ and the Spirit in order that God might be present to us, but that God also makes us present to God.

DARRELL DELANEY

It is a beautiful thing, Sue, because we are called to pray to our Father. We are also actually having help from Jesus, who is on the right hand of the Father, praying for us, even now. So, I mean, sometimes I say in my sermons: It is okay if you forget to pray for me because I know there is one who is not forgetting to pray for me. His name is Jesus and he is on the right hand of the Father right now, praying for each and every one of us; and also, the Holy Spirit, who empowers those prayers. I could say: Ahhh; and he knows what that means. I don't have to bring God up to speed; I don't have to remind God and say: Hey listen, this is a thing. He can actually understand that sigh and turn it into a prayer for me; and I appreciate the fact that God understands us from the inside out; and we see that trinitarian aspect of worship in the context of working together *and* praying together. We see that in Acts Chapter 2 as well, Scott.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Exactly; you know, the early Church...they were devoted, it is said in Acts 2... verse 42 They were devoted to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. That was the simplest form of the early Church: the teaching of the apostles, their fellowship—their *koinonia* together—the Lord's Supper, and prayer. That was the early Church, and it remains Sue, the essence of the Church to this very day. Those are the things that we need most. It reminds me, some years ago, when some churches in Canada were undergoing a massive lawsuit, partly because of abuse of First Nations people, and it looked like a lot of churches were going to lose their buildings, maybe their property and so forth, but one pastor...maybe it was a bishop...said: You know, at the end of the day, to be the Church, all we need is a Bible, a little water, a little bread and wine, and we are the Church; and that is true.

SUE ROZEBOOM

Yes; again, prayer, right? We are united in prayer, and yet, our prayers are not all united.

DARRELL DELANEY

There you go.

SUE ROZEBOOM

But somehow, Christ works that out for us. Christ and the Spirit work that out for us in bringing the longings of our hearts before God.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And that is what he promised to do; and we believe that, at the right hand of God the Father, by the Holy Spirit, that is our hope, that we can cry: Abba, Father, and we will be heard; but we want to wrap up this program and this three-part series by exploring a trinitarian foundation of Christian living in missions. So, stay tuned for that.

Segment 3

DARRELL DELANEY

I am Darrell Delaney, with Scott Hoezee and Sue Rozeboom, and you are listening to *Groundwork*.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And we are wrapping up our look at the Trinity. This is the third episode, and the third segment in the third episode, of this three-part series; and let's talk, Sue and Darrell, about the implications for everyday Christian living. Some people, I think, Sue, that the Trinity is just really academic. It doesn't have much to do with my everyday life. It is just me and Jesus, you know; but actually, what we want to say is; There is a lot of stuff that happens every day that is profoundly the result of the work of the triune God.

SUE ROZEBOOM

Well, to say it is just me and Jesus is, in fact, to say: You know, it is not you and Jesus apart from the work of God the Father and the grace of the Holy Spirit, who actually brings you into fellowship with Christ in order that you might enjoy fellowship with the Trinity. So, it is rather ironic to say: Well, it is me and Jesus.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Yes; Jesus is my personal savior. Well, he's got some help here, too, from his Father and from the Holy Spirit. We talked a little bit about praying, so we probably don't need to talk about that, and about how praying is profoundly triune. Maybe what we could talk a little bit to is how the Holy Spirit forms community. We just read that verse from Acts 2, that they were devoted to the apostles' teaching and to *fellowship*—to that *koinonia*. How does the Trinity bring us into community?

DARRELL DELANEY

And so, the Spirit actually gives us the opportunity to not only honor the Father and the Son by his power, but he also brings us to a place, like James says, where we can confess our sins to one another, so that we may be healed. So, there are aspects of different worship settings, or even in your own personal life, where you get together with some people and you say: Hey listen, I need to confess this thing. I need to come clean about this. I need you to hold me accountable on this. And the Holy Spirit's job is to convict us when we are wrong, but also to allow us to have the opportunity to make things right. So, in community in fellowship, he lets us know when we are going off the rails; he lets us know when we are drawing closer to one another; and he gives us the power to live that way.

SCOTT HOEZEE

You know, some people seem to think they can be kind of Lone Ranger Christians: Well, yeah; I believe in God, but I don't have to go to a church. What I always want to say is: You know what? Our God is a community. God is a community of three Persons. So, it only makes sense that, if we are going to bear the image of a triune God, we do it, not on our own, but with other people with whom we are made one by the Holy Spirit.

SUE ROZEBOOM

Yes; and I think sometimes we think that, you know, maybe this church or this worshipping community just isn't quite doing it for me; or I had a set-to with the minister and I just don't think that I can be in this community any longer. There may be...I don't want to discount this...there may be good reasons for finding a new worshipping community, but at the same time, if you think that, you know: I cannot be in table fellowship—the Lord's table fellowship—with this group of Christians any longer, you are rather fooling

yourself to think that going to another church, you are enjoying different table fellowship. There is one Christ and there is one table. I mean, this is the radical reality that is both a gift and a calling of us who are called Christians—us who have been identified with Christ. We are one, despite our differences, and radically, despite our differences.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Well, it is the famous image from 1 Corinthians 12: We are the body of Christ, and we are members of it; and there is one body, and it isn't just in your own congregation. All the congregations...all the denominations...

SUE ROZEBOOM

Yes.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Somehow make up the one body of Christ that Paul talks about there famously in 1 Corinthians 12. Another thing we haven't talked about in this series so much is sanctification; that is, how the Holy Spirit makes us holier and more Christlike. Let's think about that work of the Holy Spirit and of the triune God in our daily lives.

DARRELL DELANEY

I love the fact that the Holy Spirit is working "behind the scenes" in our hearts, in our lives, and in our attitudes so that we can be changed; and I think it is very important for us to know that we cannot choose right...we cannot do right...just like Romans 1 says, without God intervening in our lives; and we need his help, we need his power to actually live out the life he has called us to live.

SUE ROZEBOOM

In the life that Christ has called us to live, that life, that calling, that mission, has been sealed to us, in part by virtue of our baptism, right? There is a wonderful prayer that is used in some Reformed communions that follows the administration of the waters of baptism, and it is a prayer over the one who has been baptized, summoning God, saying: God in heaven, send your Spirit that this one might continue to grow...or might grow...to know you, to love you, and to serve you. We cannot do those things apart from the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives; so, send your Spirit and make those things transpire...like literally *transpire*.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Yes, indeed; and that is the ongoing work of the Holy Spirit, and particularly when an infant is baptized. You know, we want this child to grow up in the knowledge of the Lord, and it is going to be the Holy Spirit. We said in a previous program, Sue, you know, the Holy Spirit is the one who gives us our faith...

SUE ROZEBOOM

Yes!

SCOTT HOEZEE

The Spirit reveals to us the content of our faith, and that is what we want the baptized child to grow up knowing and believing; and that is only going to be sealed in that child's heart by the work of the Holy Spirit, who comes and brings Jesus into our hearts. The Spirit is practically Jesus' presence to us, and that keeps us connected to the Father, at whose right hand Jesus is now seated.

DARRELL DELANEY

There are many things we could say that, I mean, this is a thousand-year conversation...a two thousand-year conversation that cannot be wrapped up a short episode, but there are many aspects that the Holy Spirit, the Father and the Son affect in our scripture study, in our teaching and discipleship, our own assurance of faith, and actually, you all alluded to, unity and diversity; and we want people to know that it is not just some foreign concept of intellectual assent, but actually the Trinity has a very powerful presence in our everyday lives, and helps us to live in service and in mission, and transforms our faith in holiness in the light of a God

who loves us and is called according to his purpose.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Yes; we give thanks to God; but Sue Rozeboom, we also want to thank you for having joined us for this three-part series. It was great to have you.

SUE ROZEBOOM

It was just fantastic to be here with you again. Thanks so much for inviting me.

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 continue to dig deeply into scripture to lay the foundation for our lives. Connect with us at our website, groundworkonline.com. Share what *Groundwork* means to you. Make suggestions for future *Groundwork* programs.

DARRELL DELANEY

Groundwork is a listener supported program produced by ReFrame Ministries. Visit reframeministries.org for more information and to find more resources to encourage your faith. We are your hosts, Darrell Delaney with Scott Hoezee; and our guest today was Sue Rozeboom.

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