**It’s Not Bragging if it’s True**

Based on [John 8:48-59](http://biblia.com/books/esv/Jn8.48-59)

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The Holy Trinity

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Having celebrated the greatest event in God’s history of salvation, the death and resurrection and ascension of the Son of God, we pause a bit at the Feast of the Holy Trinity to consider the essence of God. Of course, God is too big for our puny minds, and nothing is more telling of this than the fact that God is Triune--three persons in one divine being. How can 3 equal one? I’m not entirely sure. But even scientists and mathematicians will approve of this math...that infinity plus infinity plus infinity equals infinity.

And so today we shall confess the Athanasian Creed, which says just THAT...the Father is infinite, the Son infinite, the Holy Spirit infinite...and they are not three infinites, but ONE infinite. Not only is that true doctrine, it actually is good math.

But faith is not about good math or bad math. It’s about knowing the truth as received from the Author of truth. It’s about trusting that God is who He says He is. A young child doesn’t understand *why* his mother is his mother; doesn’t understand why his mother cares for him and why this *word*, this *identity* called “mother” gives him the right to expect love and mercy from her. The child only has his mother’s *word* that it is so, and that is enough.

In the same way, God has given us his Word, that within Him is a family, a community, a “triunity.” **An eternal relationship of Father, Son and Spirit that IS the true nature of God**. And we know this, not through mathematics, but because he has given us his Word. And so there are things we do know we can say about him, because he has said them about himself.

The prince of this world is the father of lies, Satan. And his latest trick is to get us to believe that the more specific you are in defining God, the more arrogant you must be. And so if you say that Jesus is the only way to God, you are considered narrow, even intolerant. Even so, God wants us to be specific about Him, so that we can know, in no uncertain terms, who it is that we are worshipping. That’s why we end our prayers in the church with things like, “**Glory to you O Father, who lives and reigns with the Son and the Holy Spirit, One God now and forever, Amen**.” Because we worship the Triune God.

Do you remember those old American Express credit card commercials? The one’s that would sport the slogan, “**Don’t leave home without it!”** There’d be some famous actor or other celebrity who--I don’t know—let’s say goes to a hotel to claim a reservation. Let’s say Mel Gibson. And as he approaches the counter everyone in the lobby is saying, “**look, it’s him, wow!**” And the receptionist says, “**What an honour it is to have you here sir.”** Gibson says, “Thank you”, I’m here for my room please. **And the receptionist says, “Absolutely sir, but first I need to see some identification.”**

The Name of the Triune God is our ID that shows which God we represent. His Name is like a passport for the Christian, at the border of eternity. When we end our prayers with “**To you O Father be, all glory honour and worship together with the Son and the Holy Spirit**”; When we begin worship in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit; when we Baptize in the triune name we are giving the identification of the God we worship.

Moses knew the need for identification. When he was in Midian tending sheep for his father-in-law Jethro, God appeared to him in a burning bush. And God said that **He is the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.** Notice God isalready using a Trinity of persons to refer to himself. And God tells Moses to stop tending sheep and go set his people free from the cruelty of Pharaoh. And Moses says, “**Ok God, if you says so, but I’m going to need some ID to take with me.**” **Even if my people still recognize me, they’re going to need to know who it is that sent me. And when they ask who sent me, what should I say?”** And God said, I am who I am, if they ask, tell them “I AM” has sent you. The phrase I am who I am, in Hebrew is pronounced “Jehovah” or a more modern pronunciation, “Yahweh.”

Flash forward some 1500 years from that moment, and you’re at the time of our Gospel lesson. It begins after a long argument that the Jews are having with Jesus. **Jesus keeps pointing to himself as being the Light of the world, the Son of God who makes free those who believe in him...and they keep resisting his word.** They don’t like what he’s saying, and so they say mean things like, “**We were not born of sexual immorality” like you Jesus (virgin birth...yeah right!); our Father is God, and Abraham.** And Jesus says, “It’s true, you don’t believe what I say because you *are* of your Father, but your Father is not God or even Abraham. **Your Father is the one you desire to follow, the devil.”** Not something you say in polite company, but Jesus speaks the truth.

And so the argument escalates; and these Jews just give up on all reason and truth and continue to call him names, **saying he’s a “Samaritan outcast,” that he’s “demonic.”**  And as proof they point to the fact that Jesus is considering himself greater than Abraham. **In other words, rather than argue the truth to find it, they call Jesus arrogant and consider that to be proof against him.**

You know it’s not so different today. When you say that you know the Truth about God, most people won’t ask how you know it’s the truth or what makes you think so. Or if they do, they’ve already concluded you’re wrong before you begin. **But either way, they’ll consider you arrogant for thinking you’re “right,” especially in the area of religion.** If you’ve never experienced that try telling somebody that the teaching of the Lutheran Church is right where other denominations are wrong. **I mean, if you’re here, you must believe that’s true at least to some extent...unless you’re here because you like the ambiance.** At any rate you can be sure that if you tell someone that Lutheranism teaches *true* Christianity, you probably won’t have a diplomatic discussion, you will be considered arrogant, a braggart...“Holier than Thou” and all that.

So Jesus speaks the truth, and he is called a bastard son; then he is called a Samaritan; then they accuse him of having a demon. then they imply that he’s being arrogant...to which Jesus replies, “**It’s not bragging if it’s true**.” Jesus says, “**What, do you expect me to lie like you are?**” He says, “**Abraham rejoiced that he would see my day, and so yes I am greater than Abraham**.” And then he doesn’t back off, or turn down the burners. He ups the ante; better than that he buys the pot. He says “**before Abraham was, I AM**”...and they pick up stones to throw at him.

Now maybe they are wanting to stone Jesus for bad grammar, but I don’t think they would stone Jesus for bad grammar. Jesus is saying something else. **They pick up stones because they know exactly what Jesus is saying and they can’t handle it. They know he’s saying, “I am who I am” before Abraham was, I am Jehovah.** I am Yahweh. I am the great I AM; I am the Triune God. I am the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. And THAT is why they pick up stones.

And so because Jesus tells nothing but the truth, the argument against him escalates from name calling, to character judging, to attempted murder. And that’s the path for anyone who speaks the truth of God in a world of lies. We can hid behind our excuses that we don’t want to offend people; or that God is love and therefore he wouldn’t want us to hurt other’s feelings. And surely we shouldn’t set out to hurt people with words, but we shouldn’t cover up the truth with lies either.

Jesus says, “**Before Abraham was, I AM God.**” And it’s not bragging if it’s true. In fact he says, “I’m not bragging. I don’t seek my own glory. There is One who seeks my glory for me, and He is the judge.” Jesus says, “**If I glorify myself, my glory is nothing. It is my Father who glorifies me**.” Despite the persecution and the suffering and the death that Jesus will undergo, he knows that God will glorify him, because God is his Father, and that Word means as much to him as the word “mother” means to a little child.

And so too, friends, when you were married to Christ in Baptism, you received his Father as your Father. **The name of the great I AM was placed upon you and, being one flesh with Jesus, you were reunited with God.** And you can boldly confess this truth to others, and bear witness to God in Christ Jesus, that he has redeemed you through Water and the Word.

It might sound like bragging to say that in your Baptism, God has selected and elected you to a special place, a seat of honour, a vantage from his Triune family, from which you will never see death. **It might seem arrogant to say that, from the multitude of sinners, God has pulled you out of the mire put His name upon you and made you his own. You might as well call yourself a celebrity if you are special enough to have caught the attention and the eye of the eternal and infinite God.** It might *sound like* bragging, but it’s not bragging. It’s not bragging *because* it’s true.