

The Trinity

THE REASON

1. Before we talk about *last things*, let's talk about **first things**. Before we talk about *where* we're going, let's talk about **why** we're going.
2. The **DOCTRINE OF THE TRINITY** is perhaps the most beautiful and mysterious doctrine in all of our Christian faith. Since the incarnation what we find is a God who is *infinitely relational, intimately personal*, and in Jesus Christ also *profoundly human*
3. The Western Gospel sends us on a quest for forgiveness; but the deepest cry of our hearts is our searching for *life*.
4. What the doctrine of the Trinity is telling us is that God is fundamentally a relational being. The Father, Son and Spirit live in a great dance of shared life that is full and rich and passionate, creative and good, beautiful and satisfying, dynamic and flourishing.
5. Now, why does this God, this Father, Son and Spirit, create the universe? Why does this Father, Son and Spirit create human beings, you, me, our children?
6. This Father, Son and Spirit create in order to share what they have with us. The goal of the Trinity is inclusion. Love shares.
7. The idea of creation flows out of the glorious life shared by the Father, Son, and the Spirit. It is no accident that the Apostle Paul chose the word "*adoption*" to describe God including us.

Eph 1:3-5 *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every*

spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, 4 just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before Him. In love 5 He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will... NAS

The basic idea of adoption is to include.

8. If this dream of the Trinity to extend the dance of life to us is going to come to fruition, two things have to happen. The first is *creation* itself. The second thing that must happen is the *incarnation*.
9. The beloved Son stepped out of the eternity into history to be the point of meeting, the point of union, the connection. Jesus came to be the mediator. God's dream is that the whole earth be alive with his glory, filled with the great dance of the Father, Son, and Spirit.

Habakkuk 2:14 For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea. NIV

Rev 22:3-4 *No longer will there be any curse.* NIV

10. We look at our work, our gardening, our cooking, our family life, our parties, our baseball games, our fishing, our cookouts with friends, our vacations and all we see are the parts. They all make up a bigger picture and that picture is the face of God. **Ephesians 4:6** *"There is one God and Father who is over all, through all, and in all."*

WESTERN PACKAGING OF THE GOSPEL

1. When you see the Trinity and the incarnation for what they are, you are poised to see yourself and your life in the true light. You and your life are the living expression of the glory and joy and beauty – the great dance– of the Father, Son and Spirit.

2. Jesus, of the western gospel, can get you forgiven of your sins, keep you out of hell, and get you into heaven, but he does not have much to say to you about the mystery of your life today. When the incarnation is ignored or misunderstood it means the downsizing of Jesus Christ.
3. In the development of Western theology, the holiness of God was substituted for the Trinity as the fundamental truth about God.
4. The gospel in the Western model begins with the statement that God is holy (holy in the legal sense). The human race fell into sin and is liable to punishment. Jesus comes to satisfy the holiness and justice of God. With the this packaging of the western gospel, several things have gone disastrously wrong.
 - a. First, the overall picture has been lost. Gone is the great dance of the Trinity and the astonishing vision of the Father, Son and Spirit reaching out to share their life and glory with us. The death of Jesus Christ is now aimed at God rather than human corruption and alienation. Jesus comes to do something to God, to satisfy his white-gloved legalities, so that we can be forgiven.
 - b. Secondly, the cross has suddenly replaced Jesus himself as the point of the eternal significance. Jesus Christ, not the cross, is and always will be the center of the universe and all things. But what is critical in the Western model, is that Jesus suffered the legal punishment that was to fall upon us.
 - c. Thirdly, **justification** is over-emphasized to the point of replacing **adoption** as the heart of the Christian message. The gospel here is all about being forgiven. But forgiveness serves a higher goal, and that higher goal is our inclusion in the life of the Trinity. But in

the Western model, the higher goal is virtually forgotten.

- d. Fourthly, the overemphasis upon *justification* and the virtual silence on our *adoption* leaves us in the dark about our true identity– the very secret of our existence. Jesus, according to the western model, came to fix the legal problem. Gone is the vision that he is the point of union between Divine and human life.
 - i. We are left in a state of forgiveness and with the promise of heaven after we die but we have lost our connection to the music and the magic of sharing in the great dance of life with God.
- 5. In the dark about our true identity, and thus the meaning of our human existence, we have been thrown into a desperate search to find a new identity. There is an identity crisis in the corporate soul of the Western church and it is driving us crazy.
- 6. The truth is this world belongs to the Holy Trinity and is permeated by the great dance of life shared by the Father, Son and Spirit. You have been included in the great dance. The great dance of the Trinity is being played out in you.

Col 3:3 *For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God. NAS*

Col 1:27 *God's plan is to make known his secret to his people, this rich and glorious secret which he has for all peoples. And the secret is that Christ is in you, which means that you will share in the glory of God. TEV*