

## HEARTBEATS- Staying Connected 9/10/2021

Dear Friends in Christ,

We may take it for granted, but one of the more confusing concepts about God is that God is triune—One God whom we experience as three different persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. For those who have difficulty with the idea of God as “Father” because of poor experiences with an earthly father, it can be more helpful to refer to them as Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier—or the One who gives us faith. Nevertheless, there are those who have not grasped that Jesus is God and believe Him to be different as the Son of God—distinctly separate from the Father and appearing when Jesus was born, a long time after God was.

Each year, when I teach confirmation, I start the class by reading the first parts of Genesis and the Gospel of John. The conversation usually goes like this with a student first reading Genesis 1:1-3:

**Reader One:** “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters.”

**Pastor:** “Stop. Who was there?”

**Students:** “God.” “The Spirit of God.”

**Pastor:** “Right. Two separate persons of God at the same time. One who is creating, and One who is moving over the waters. Okay. Continue.”

**Reader One:** “And God said, ‘Let there be light,’ and there was light.”

**Pastor:** “Okay. Stop there. How was the light created?”

**Students:** “God said there should be light.”

**Pastor:** “Right. So, the light was created when God spoke—by God’s Word. In fact, if we read the whole first chapter of Genesis, we will find that everything that exists was created by the power of God’s Word. Three different ways that we understand God: as the One who is doing the creating; as the Spirit who is present during the creating; and the Word that is the creating force or power. Now, someone else read John 1 beginning at verse 1.”

**Reader Two:** “In the beginning...”

**Pastor:** “Stop. When did this happen?”

**Students:** “In the beginning.”

**Pastor:** “Isn’t that the same as when Genesis says everything was created?”

**Students:** “Yes.”

**Pastor:** “Okay. Continue.”

**Reader Two:** “...was the Word...”

**Pastor:** “Stop. Didn’t we just read that, too, in Genesis—that the Word was there at the beginning?”

**Students:** “Yes.”

**Pastor:** “All right. Continue.”

**Reader Two:** (cautiously) “...and the Word was with God...”

**Pastor:** “Stop. Sorry for another interruption. Isn’t this also what we read in Genesis?”

**Students:** “Yes.”

**Pastor:** “But doesn’t this say that they are separate? Word and God?”

**Students:** “Yes.”

**Pastor:** “So the Word is separate from God who is creating?”

**Students:** “Yes.”

**Pastor:** “I’ll probably interrupt again, but continue.”

**Reader Two:** “...He was with God in the beginning.” (Pause, looking at me.) “Through Him all things were made; without Him nothing was made that has been made.”

**Pastor:** “Okay, stop there. Is there anything here that we didn’t read about in Genesis 1?”

**Students:** “No.”

**Pastor:** “So, John is just telling us, helping us to understand what we read in Genesis 1. Now, someone else, read John 1:14.”

**Reader Three:** “The Word became flesh and made His dwelling among us.”

**Pastor:** “By what name do we call the Word who became flesh—human—and who lived with humankind?”

**Students:** “Jesus?”

**Pastor:** “Right. So, Jesus is the Word, right?”

**Students:** “Yes.”

**Pastor:** “And the Word was there at the beginning, right?”

**Students:** “Yes.”

**Pastor:** “And it was through the Word that everything was created, right?”

**Students:** “Yes.”

**Pastor:** “So, Jesus the Word, is in the beginning, carrying out God’s instructions for creation, while the Holy Spirit is watching everything, right?”

**Students:** (slowly) “Yes.”

**Pastor:** “So, it is God who is the Creator, but this One God is three different persons, Creator, Word, and Spirit, right?”

It’s at this point that at least one of the student’s faces will brighten, and I see the light bulb go one over their head, and I know they’ve gotten it. Jesus is the Word of God, present in the beginning, through whom everything is created. One God, but three different persons, Creator, Word, and Spirit.

This is always my favorite confirmation class because this realization is so important and powerful for understanding who Jesus is, and later for understanding what this means when Jesus gives up His life for us.

In Christ's love,  
Pastor Jeffrey