



NAC-USA
DEVELOPMENT
INSTITUTE

The Glory of
God

The Trinity

God the
Almighty
Creator

MIDWEEK SCRIPT

2017

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Session 1 – The Glory of God

Welcome to the first small group session of 2017. This month we'll be looking at some of the characteristics of the Triune God and how, through faith, we can have a better understanding of the One who is holy and perfect. The descriptions of the divine characteristics bring to expression the perfection and absoluteness of God. With our human language, words can never do justice to the reality of God. Even if we experienced God's glory in person, we still would not be able to completely grasp it.

We can look at Moses and how he experienced something similar. In Exodus 32, Moses became angry with the Israelites because they started to worship the golden calf while he was on Mount Sinai. Out of frustration and disappointment, he smashed the stone tablets that contained the Ten Commandments. Soon after that, God instructed the Israelites to resume their journey to the Promised Land, but Moses was reluctant to move forward without reassurance that God's favor was still upon them. As evidence, Moses asked God to show him His glory. God said to Moses, "You cannot see My face; for no man shall see Me, and live.... Here is a place by Me, and you shall stand on the rock. So it shall be, while My glory passes by, that I will put you in the cleft of the rock, and will cover you with My hand while I pass by. Then I will take away My hand, and you shall see My back; but My face shall not be seen" (Exodus 33:20-23).

God's words give Moses, and us, a glimpse of His greatness. God kept His face turned from Moses, not as a slight, but as an act of love. As God said, no one can see His face and live. This is because He is truly perfect and holy, and man, who is unworthy, weak, and sin-filled, could not bear His full glory. We will only be able to experience God's full glory in the future, when we have become the new creation. For now, we are encouraged by Paul in 2 Corinthians to "walk by faith, not by sight" (2 Corinthians 5:7). We can be glad in our knowledge that we will know God fully in another time and that right now, we can revel in the depth of what we do not know and can still learn.

So is there a way for us to experience God's glory today? Of course! God's glory is revealed to us by Jesus Christ. Christ is the perfect example of the greatness of God. One aspect of God's glory is His giving of the law. Just as He gave Moses the Ten Commandments, He gave us the two greatest commandments through His Son: to love God with all our heart, soul, and mind, and to love one another as Jesus has loved us. Through the laws, God aims not to suppress us, but to preserve us from evil. We also experience God's glory through His love, which was proven through the fulfillment of His promise to send His Son as the Redeemer of the world. God's faithfulness to us is also a sign of His glory. Our failures do not change the fact that He wants to save us.

God's unchanging nature gives way to His perfect character. Because He is perfect, He is always true. His word is reliable, and He is true to His promises. Everything that occurs in Him, emanates from Him, and is created by Him is perfect and good. This is demonstrated by the fact that there's no difference between His will and His actions, His intentions and their execution. You might be thinking, "How is this true? I am one of God's creations and I am not perfect." An aspect of God's perfection is His inability to fail. This means that when He created us, He did not fail by allowing His perfect creation to fall into sin. Instead, He created a path for us that would allow us to share in His perfection once again.

We experience perfection in Jesus Christ. He is perfect in speech and conduct, and He is our example as we transform our nature in preparation for His return. We are not on earth right now to just wait until we dwell with God and can be perfect again. Transforming our nature requires work and effort on our part to strive for holiness, which is another characteristic of God. We are called to holiness by the Lord in Leviticus 19 when He told Moses to tell the Israelites, "You shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy" (Leviticus 19:2). God's holiness is both a gift and a duty for us.

If we are to strive for holiness, which comes from God, then what makes up His holiness? God's holiness applies to His being, His nature, and His rule, and they are all majestic, untouchable, and separate from the profane. Think of what this means. The Holy One is not devoted to the secular or the impure; he only has sacred and holy purposes. We are called to the same purposes. What earthly things and purposes are you devoted to? What is keeping you from trading them for holy purposes?

As Christians, we decide to live for God. We want to experience His full glory. We yearn to be filled with holy purpose, and we wait for the time when perfection will again reign in all creation. Some days, the decision to live for God is easy

to make. Other days, it is not. Moses, when upset and disappointed in the Israelites' worship of the golden calf, begged God to be present to them and show His glory—and God responded. Let us remember that God is with us through all of our struggles and invites us to be close to Him.

Session 2 – The Trinity

Welcome back! In our first session of the new year we discussed various characteristics of God and how it is important for us to see His glory. In our session today, we will discuss the doctrine of the Trinity, which is an understanding that can be hard to fully grasp because, as the Catechism states, it is a mystery. The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit comprise the One God. The fact that God has always been triune is attested by the self-revelation of God within the history of salvation. It's made clear that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit have existed, created, acted, and sustained from the beginning. We must always keep in mind when we talk about the Trinitarian nature of God that there is One God as affirmed in Deuteronomy 6:4 – "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one." To help us grow in our understanding of the Trinity today, we'll take a short look at how the three persons of God are revealed in Scripture.

Our God exists in three persons, which is affirmed by Scripture in both the Old and New Testaments. Let's start with the Old Testament. We find references to the work of the triune God firstly in the creation story. In Genesis 1:2 the Bible says, "The earth was without form, and void; and darkness was on the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters." Later in verse 26, God says: "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness..." The English plural pronouns "us" and "our" in this context are translated from the Hebrew plural Elohim', which means the "divine" and, depending on the context, can also mean "gods." In the light of the gospel, it is to be understood as a reference to the triune God.

We can also identify the actions of the triune God in the Aaronic blessing in Numbers 6:24-26: "The Lord bless you and keep you; The Lord make His face shine upon you, and be gracious to you; The Lord lift up His countenance upon you, and give you peace." By this blessing being voiced to the people in three distinct phrasings, we can conclude that God is referring to the triune nature of His being.

Continuing in the Old Testament, we can find another reference to the triune God in the vision summoning Isaiah to be a prophet. Isaiah 6:3 says, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory!" The triple repetition of the word "holy" can also be understood as a reference to the Trinitarian nature of God's being.

Now let's shift to the New Testament, starting with the baptism of Jesus. In Luke 3:21-22, Luke writes, "When all the people were baptized, it came to pass that Jesus also was baptized; and while He prayed, the heaven was opened. And the Holy Spirit descended in bodily form like a dove upon Him, and a voice came from heaven which said, 'You are My beloved Son; in You I am well pleased.'" At this event, the three persons of God are represented at the same time in the same place. Jesus, the Son, is in the water; the Holy Spirit descends like a dove; and the Father speaks. This emphasizes that the Son of God works as part of a unit with the Father and the Holy Spirit.

Perhaps the strongest evidence of the Trinity is found in the Great Commission that Jesus gave His disciples prior to His ascension. Listen to Jesus's words in Matthew 28:18-19: "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit..." Take note that the word "name" used here is singular—each person of God has His individual name. Jesus put the Son and the Spirit in the same framework as the Father. This attests to the fact that we have One God who exists in three persons.

There are several other places in the New Testament that teach us about the Trinitarian nature of God and you are encouraged to read through these passages, which you can find in your guide.

The doctrine of the Trinity teaches us that the three divine persons of God eternally relate to each other and are eternally one. They cannot be separated. All acts of God in creation, redemption, and salvation are those of the Father,

of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Each person is fully God, as Scripture confirms in Philippians 1:2, Titus 2:13-14, and Acts 5:3-4. The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are one God, of one essence, or substance, and will. Hence, God is one being that is three persons.

As we have perhaps experienced, the doctrine of the Trinity isn't easy to grasp; however, we are trying to grow in our understanding of God—a journey that has no end. As stated in 1 John 4:16, God is love. All He has done, is doing, and will do for us is out of His great love for us. Demonstrate your love for Him by continuing to dive into the Bible to learn more about Him and utilize the divine services and small groups to help deepen your understanding of our great God.

Session 3 – God the Almighty Creator

Welcome back. Today in session 3, we are going to complete our series on the characteristics of God. I'd like to start with the "omni" words: omnipotent, omniscient, and omnipresent. Most often when we hear these words, they are in reference to God because only He is the true embodiment of them.

God is omnipotent, or all powerful. He is the Almighty. The profession in our First Article of Faith – "I believe in God the Father, the Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth" – attests that God can do anything, that nothing is impossible for Him, and that for Him there are no restrictions whatsoever in the implementation of His will. We can see this so clearly expressed in Psalm 115, "But our God is in heaven; He does whatever He pleases."

God's omnipotence is also clearly shown to mankind in His creation, for by His word alone everything came into being from nothing. We see this articulated over and over again in the Psalms. In His omnipotence, God constitutes the beginning and the end. He is the Alpha and the Omega, "who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty." The new creation will therefore also be an expression of God's omnipotence.

God is omniscient, or all knowing. This is so beautifully portrayed in Psalm 139: "You know my sitting down and my rising up; You understand my thought afar off. You comprehend my path and my lying down, and are acquainted with all my ways. For there is not a word on my tongue, but behold, O Lord, You know it altogether." All knowledge is His and is revealed in the full trinity of God, through the Father, the Son, and the Spirit. Because the Holy Spirit dwells in us, we can always pray that our hearts can be open to this knowledge and guidance from God.

Psalm 139 also refers to God's omnipresence: "If I ascend into heaven, You are there; if I make my bed in hell, behold, You are there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there Your hand shall lead me, and Your right hand shall hold me." What a comforting thought for us! God is everywhere, at all times. He is the Eternal. Temporal limitations do not exist for Him.

Psalm 90 reads: "Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever You had formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, You are God." The past, present, and future are all equally current to God. That God is exalted over, and stands above, the dimension of time is implied in 2 Peter 3:8: "But, beloved, do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day is a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day."

God is the Creator and Sustainer. He has made all things. For thousands of years mankind has studied the creation and we still have not come to the end! Everything that exists has emanated from God's creative activity and is subject to Him. The creation and its order bear witness to God's wisdom, the magnitude of which no human being can fathom. With admiration the psalmist exclaims: "O Lord, how manifold are Your works! In wisdom You have made them all. The earth is full of Your possessions..."

In the beginning God looked at His creation and it was good. There was no fear, no sin, no death. But then came the Fall and with it the brokenness of man and the creation. We can see the suffering of creation in the words of Romans 8: "For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now." But God sustains the earth for

His purposes, as we can read in Genesis 8:22, “While the earth remains, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, winter and summer, and day and night shall not cease.”

For the last millennia, everything keeps coming back. God keeps making all things new and keeps everything in perfect balance. Everything demonstrates the Creator’s constant care: “For You love all things that exist, and detest none of the things that You have made... How would anything have endured if You had not willed it? Or how would anything not called forth by You have been preserved? You spare all things, for they are Yours, O Lord, You who love the living. For Your immortal Spirit is in all things” (Wisdom of Solomon 11:24 – 12:1 NRSA).

God is also the Loving One, our Father. This is most explicitly revealed in Jesus Christ: “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life” (John 3:16). God not only turns to the world in love, but God is love. And because of His love, this Almighty, Omnipotent God, this Holy and Perfect One came down to us. He took on suffering and death for us. How often do we reflect on what this cost Him?

When we consider all these characteristics of God, what should our response be? Perhaps we can sum them up into four things: recognition, thankfulness, stewardship, and worship.

The first is described in Psalm 8: “When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, the moon and the stars, which You have ordained, what is man that You are mindful of him?” When we contemplate the greatness of God, we recognize our smallness. We see things in the right perspective. We see all things are in God’s hands and find security there.

This recognition leads to thankfulness. We are thankful not only for what God has given us, but more importantly for who He is. David shows us the connection between awareness, thankfulness, and stewardship in his prayer for the temple in 1 Chronicles: “Now therefore, our God, we thank You and praise Your glorious name. But who am I, and who are my people, that we should be able to offer so willingly as this? For all things come from You, and of Your own we have given You.”

Let’s consider that last phrase, “and of Your own we have given You.” Everything we have is God’s! Our offerings to Him are simply us giving back to Him what was His to begin with. When we realize that all things come from God we must make every effort to take care of what He has given us and use it for His glory. The creation, our wealth, our time, our relationships, our church...what have I done to care for these things? Am I glorifying God in my use of them?

And finally worship: when we consider all that our God is, what else could our response be? Worship is where all of our responses to God begin. Worship puts us in the right perspective. Worship ties us to our Creator and deepens our relationship to Him. Our Chief Apostle encourages us to worship our God in his verse for the year, Philippians 4:20: “Now to our God and Father be glory forever and ever. Amen.”

Let us take time this year to stand in wonderment of our God and continually praise and worship Him.