

Loving Father, Self-Sacrificing Son, and Life-Giving Spirit

What kind/God do I wrshp/serve? What's his nature, prsnlty? What's he like? I suppose evone has ask that qstn, whtvr relgn they follow. If you're a Canaanite follower/Baal, you worship a fertilty god, who gives rain to earth & chldrn to womb; who also demands ritual prostitution and infant scrfc as forms/wrshp. If Rom citizen, it's consdrd your civic duty: offer prayers, incense, drink offrngs to curry gods' favor, keep empire strong. If Aztec living in 16th cent Mex, your wrshp invlvs grotesque human scrfcs – victms slghtrd alive top/pyrmd, their blood giving nrshmnt to sun god, mthr earth. If Muslim man, faithful to Allah, your rewrd in aftrlf: 72 virgins, who bring you pleasure/etrnty. And if Buddhist fr India, you bel in karma: that good/bad things hap to good/bad ppl.

You get pretty good idea of what a god/deity is like fr what say/do/demnd. What does God/Bbl say/do/demnd? What's our God like? Only way know for sure: listen what says, see what does. Trnty Sun allows us pause & do just that: ponder nature & prsnlty our God. And even if we can't fully comprhnd doctrn/Trnty – FSHS, 3 prsns in 1 God – we can still observe what he's like, fr his Word, fr most famous psg/Bbl, Jn 3:16, and surrndng vss.

Against a heathen pantheon of vengeful, vindictive, angry deities, our God stands out as a loving Fr. **Vs. 16a** – he is loving Fr; he loves us; his nature is love! **Vs. 16ab**, J, who taught us that the hvnly Fr is not just his hvnly Fr but also our hvnly Fr. So we have a Fr in hvn who loves us so much: gave us his own Son. Prnts'll do anythng to prtct chldrn; they'll stop at nthng to keep kids safe, and they'd do evthng in pwr to prevent harm fr coming to them. So now fathom the unfthmbl love/God/Fr, who loves his Son J w/whole hrt, but also loves us w/whole hrt – fathom how this loving Fr **vs. 16ab**; gave him over to a wrld/hate; sent into this wrld to suffer & die. And why? Bec we, “**the wrld**”, had rebelled vs our loving Fr and were on fast track to hell. But a parent'll do anythng to prtct chldrn. So God sent his Son, gave him to us as a gift, turned him over to Satan, to endure fury/God & cruelty/man, so that we wldn't have to! God sent his Son as a sub to take our place. How you think Fr felt when saw Son tortured/dth/cross? God knows what like lose Son! But how you think Fr felt to see that his risen & ascndd Son had saved his other chldrn? That was plan all along, a plan of love, from a loving Fr.

We've got Fr's Day coming up in 3 wks; and we think re earthly frs. Maybe you grew up w/loving fr. Maybe had great dad who raised you w/love, care, compssn; who was always there for you, supprtn, tchn, guidng, prtctng, trainng you in way/Lord – way good dad shld. Or maybe you had awful dad, who hurt/abused you, who was not there for you, who did not show you love, who set pitiful exmpl for you of what means be fr-figure. I want tell you smthng I've tght my chldrn & stdnts: whthr your dad was fantstc fr or awful man, truth is: you have 2 dads, earthly fr & hvnly Fr. Earthly fr is not perf; is sinful; will let you down. But your Fr in hvn is your perf Fr; he'll nvr let you down; and he loves you w/holy love that far surpasses any kind/love you could ever exprnc here on earth. Jn writes, “**See what great love the Fr has lavishd on us, that we shld be called chldrn of God! And that is what we are!**” (1 Jn 3:1). And today Paul says that “**we are God's chldrn**” who cry out “**Abba, Fr**” (Rom 8:15-16). On this Trinity Sun, treasure fact that your God is your loving Fr.

And that he is the Fr's self-scrfcng Son. **Vs. 16ab**. And J: **vs. 13**. And I call him God's SS Son bec didn't have to endure cross. J: not forced vs his will; not strong-armd into doing his Dad's dirty wrk. No, J lookd at you/me, living in sin, like shp w/o shphrd, and loved us so much that became our GS & laid down life for shp – willingly, intntnly! Our GS: “**No one takes [my life] fr me, but I lay it down of my own accord**” (Jn 10:18). That is a SS love! J was under no oblgtn rescue us fr mess we'd made for selves. But Paul: “**When we were still pwrless, Xp died for the ungodly. Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous prsn, though for a good prsn smone might psbly dare to die. But God demnstrts his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Xp died for us**” (Rom 5:6-8). J made decisn to scrfc self on cross, to rescue us fr sin, Stn, dth, & hell. He wanted do it! It bght him joy do it! “**For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame**” (Heb 12:2). So on this Trinity Sun, when you look at J, Son/God, your Bro, best big Bro you cld ever have, remem: J wanted save you; wanted cross/res; wants you bel in him, bec wants you have etrn life. **Vs. 16**. That is what your Bro wants for you, which is why he endured cross for you. J did not die against his will. He faced cross w/bravery & love, for you. He is the SS Son.

And on this Trnty Sun, we also treasure fact: our God is LG Spirit. *“We bel in the HS, the Lord, the giver/life”*, we confess in Nicene Crd. The Spirit gives us life. Normally we think of our mthr as the one who gives us life. Mthr’s Day was 2 wks ago, when we celbrt moms and thank them for giving us life. When I used to mouth-off to my mom as a kid, she’d: *“I brght you into this wrld, and I can take you out/it!”* My mom is no murderer! But it is thru our moms that we have birth & life.

But it is thru LG Spirit that we have new birth & sprtl life. J is in convrstn w/Nicdms re rebirth when: vs. 3-6. The flesh-giving-birth-to-flesh is start of your earth-life. The Spirit-giving-birth-to-spirit is start faith-life. Rebirth is convrsn. Rebirth is when LG Spirit changes your hrt and brings you fr being unbel to bel, fr rejctn of God to saving faith/God. That: rebirth, 2nd birth, beginning of your life of faith. And when J speaks re being **“born of wtr & Sprt,”** he reminds us that most often (not always) that rebirth takes place in baptism. Thru waters/Bap, LG Spirit raises us fr sprtl dth to new life in Xp; he makes us alive – not heartbeat alive, but faithbeat alive. Today J spks re **“evone born/Spirit.”** And by God’s grace, that is you! Only reason that you are a Xian, that you bel in J by faith is that the LG Spirit gave you rebirth into a new life. We also bel (like last wk, w/valley dry bones & all bodies coming back to life) that on Last Day, the LG Spirit will blow like the wind, across face/earth, and will raise our dust fr grnd, and bring us to life once again in our res. And once he’s restored us to life, then the LG Spirit will bring us to eternal life – just like our Triune God promised.

So, Loving Fr, SS Son, LG Spirit – that is what our Triune God is like. And yet, as we will soon confess in the Athnsn Crd, *“They are not 3 gods, but 1 God... not 3 lords, but 1 Lord”* – a mystery beynd comprhnsn. It’s okay if you can’t fully undrstnd mystry/Trnty. He’s God; he’s above us; he cannot be fully graspd. But what we can undrstnd, what Triune God wants us undrstnd/know/bel: he is the Loving Fr, SS Son, & LG Spirit, and that vs. 16c.

John 3:1-17

Now there was a Pharisee, a man named Nicodemus who was a member of the Jewish ruling council. ²He came to Jesus at night and said, “Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God. For no one could perform the signs you are doing if God were not with him.”

³Jesus replied, “Very truly I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again.”

⁴“How can someone be born when they are old?” Nicodemus asked. “Surely they cannot enter a second time into their mother’s womb to be born!”

⁵Jesus answered, “Very truly I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless they are born of water and the Spirit. ⁶Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit. ⁷You should not be surprised at my saying, ‘You must be born again.’ ⁸The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit.”

⁹“How can this be?” Nicodemus asked.

¹⁰“You are Israel’s teacher,” said Jesus, “and do you not understand these things? ¹¹Very truly I tell you, we speak of what we know, and we testify to what we have seen, but still you people do not accept our testimony. ¹²I have spoken to you of earthly things and you do not believe; how then will you believe if I speak of heavenly things? ¹³No one has ever gone into heaven except the one who came from heaven—the Son of Man. ¹⁴Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, ¹⁵that everyone who believes may have eternal life in him.”

¹⁶For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. ¹⁷For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.

