

**Loved in Christ**  
**April 28, 2024**

**Our Savior is Way Lutheran Church**

**Pastor John Scott**

Who is our God? Our God is the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. In his children's message at 8:00 am service, Mr. Ray tried to explain this to the kids, and he said that it is a difficult thing thinking and knowing that we believe in one God, but yet there is the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. How does that work? There is three in one, right? One God, and three persons. And how does the math work out? Short answer, it does not. It does not. It is just part of the mystery of who Jesus is. This is how we learn about who God is when we learn from the scriptures. There is this mystery surrounding who God is. And yet, our questions about who we are, about what God calls us to do in this world, about who we are, and what His purpose is in the world are not mysteries; they are revealed to us in scripture. They are told to us all again and again and again. God's purpose is to bring His people back to Himself, to people who have been far away to be brought back close.

Last week we talked about the story of the Prodigal Son, of the Loving Father who no matter where the son was, no matter where he was, that son was looking over their eyes and waiting for him to simply turn around and see that he was loved. And when that son returned, the father celebrated, and that is who this father is. We just sang about the faithfulness of God to us, about His presence with us. And today we are going to shift from talking about God the Father now to God the Son. As we talk about this through our series, *Loved & Sent*, these are meant to be two words that you carry with you to help you understand who you are and what you are called to be and do in this world.

And some of you have picked up the books on the way up. Maybe you have got your own. I have heard good things so far as you have been reading through it, ways that you have been able to see maybe a little more clearly who you are and what God is calling you to do. In the end, these are the two questions that it talks about. Who am I? And what am I supposed to be doing? What is my purpose? What is my identity? And what is my purpose? So today I wanted to take you back just a little bit.

Jesus loves me, but how do you remember a song? I remember a song from my childhood, in Sunday school, it went like this. *Jesus loves me, this I know; For the Bible tells me so. Little ones to Him belong; they are weak, but He is strong. Yes, Jesus loves me . . .* And we went. When I was a kid, we did faster and faster and faster because of what we did, but that is the song. And for me, that is nostalgic. That is what we sang in Sunday school.

When the kids would kind of go off and do their own thing, the teachers taught us that. And the words are pretty simple: *Jesus loves me, this I know; for the Bible tells me so.* And that was easy enough for me when I was little, I could just take that at kind of face value. But then I grew up a little bit and I started reading scripture.

And I started wondering, well, how does He love me? If the Bible says so, well, where is it? Show me; teach me; and I think that some of us here today are on that path and in that mode. If I am to believe that I am loved, if I am supposed to believe all this Jesus stuff that I hear about in church, where is that? How does that happen? Is it true? Is it for me? And some of you who are here today, maybe you are back in church for the first time in decades, the first time ever, and we are singing the song that everybody seems to know around you. It is one of those things like, *Christ is risen! He is risen indeed, Alleluia.*

We have these things, these back-and-forth things that we know, because we have been part of this family for a while. But they are instructive. They are good. Right. We all know these things when we learn them in church about *Christ is risen* or *Jesus loves me*, these are things that are going to not make silly jokes, like knock, knock jokes, but they are things that are going to come back around in our lives.

When we are so tired and exhausted by everything that life has thrown our way, we fall back on the foundation that has been built for us. And when that foundation is built in “Jesus loves me; this I know,” we fall down on that. And it gives us hope. It gives us a place to stand up, even when we are weak, right?

For when we are weak, He is strong. The song says it right there. I learned it when I was like three. And now when I am older, it helps me. Because I know just how weak I am. How does Jesus love me?

There are three ways that Jesus shows His love for us. The first is Christmas, the time when God came to be one of us. When Jesus was born, what percentage of Him was God and what percentage of Him was man? He was a hundred percent God and a hundred percent man. Fully God and fully man. And in Nicene Creed, it reminds us that Jesus is completely God and completely human.

What does that mean that He is completely human? It means that He truly understands what we go through. He lived as an actual human being. He was tempted like we are. He suffered like we do. He had the aches and pains in His body like we all have. His friends died, and He mourned. He wondered what His purpose would be and even on that day when He knew He was going to the cross, He cried out to the Father, and He said, "Your will be done."

The power of Christmas is not in the gift giving. It is not in all the things that we put around. The power of Christmas is in the presence of Jesus with us. This is one of the enormous ways that Jesus loves us, that He will be with us no matter what, no matter what you are going through, He is with you through that.

Now, we kind of assume that to be difficult things, but I want you to know when you are celebrating, when you are joyful, when those great things happen in your life, He is there too. And He is celebrating right with you. His presence with you is real, and it is total. He will not leave you. It may be difficult to see Him, sense Him, to feel that He is with you. You may question that. You may say, I cannot, I do not know. I do not feel like God is with me.

But then we go back to this. How do we know who Jesus is and how He loves us? We go back to scripture. And as we read, we see that all God wants to do throughout all of human history is to be with His people. This is our God. He loves us. And He wants to be present with us. Jesus shows us this love by being present with us. In Colossians it says this, that Jesus was the firstborn of all creation, for God in all of His fullness was pleased to live in Christ. Again, this fully God, fully human, everything was made through Him and in Him and for Him. Jesus.

The second piece is one that is very familiar to you all. We wear cross necklaces and earrings. Some of us wear earrings. We see crosses

everywhere. We see a beautiful cross in the stained glass behind us. The cross reminds us of what Jesus did for us. It reminds us that He loves us by pardoning us. The reality of the cross was that His death was not His at all. He did not need to die. He was perfect. He followed His Father's Will perfectly, but what He chose to do was to sacrifice Himself for each and every one of us, for all the times that we have fallen short of God's glory and His plan for us. Every time that we have made a mistake and said, every time that we have turned our back just a little bit to God, Jesus said, "I want to forgive that. So, I will sacrifice myself. I will go to the cross. I will stretch out my arms so that you can be connected with God." Jesus on the cross, pardoned us for our sins. He took on our sin and paid for it.

Now, when Paul writes this to the people in Colossae, He is writing this to a mixed group, who are somewhere Jewish, but most were trying to figure out who Jesus was. Could He be for them? And I imagine there are people here today that are wondering the same thing. Is this really for me? Or is this just for people who, when they were little, they got sung a song in Sunday school, "Jesus loves me?" Is it just for them?

No. Jesus is for you. What He did is for all of us. This includes you who were once far away from God, each one of us. He has reconciled you to Himself through His death. Through His physical body. Jesus is for each and every one of us. No matter if this is your first time in church or your thousand, no matter if this is the first time you have been interested and wondering about what God has in store for you, or if you have been living this out throughout your entire life, Jesus is for you.

He loves you. His pardon brings you life. This is His presence with you. He allows you to be pure and holy and blameless in God's sights. When God looks at us, He only sees what Jesus has done for us. This is why when we confess our sins at the beginning of church, which, if you are new to church, that is kind of an odd thing to do, to walk in here, sing a couple songs, and then say, I am the most terrible person in the whole world, right off the bat. That is not how we enter anybody else's house, is it? When people walk into your house, do they instantly say all the things that they have done wrong in the last week?

That is not how it works. But here, that is what we do because we are each reminded that we are in the same boat, that we have the same issues and the same problems, and we have the same God who loves us, that we are

all equal in his sight. And when God sees us, He only sees the freedom that Jesus has given to us.

That is truly a gift. That is the pardon that we have. The third thing, the last thing that is a way that Jesus shows us that he loves us is this. *Christ is risen. He is risen indeed. Alleluia!* We say that to remember Easter, that the grave was empty, that Jesus rose from the dead, that He was victorious over death, and what that means is that death has no power. That in Jesus, this thing that we fear, this thing that we do everything we can in our lives to avoid, Jesus has taken away its power. Because in Him, death will not have any lasting power, effect in Him. There is life eternal. This is the power that Jesus has. It is a power that transcends just the physical space that we see but extends into the unseen world into the spiritual realms.

Jesus is not just King over earth but over heaven as well. He can do something that no one else can. He has conquered death. And so, in this power, we see all the things that He can do. He made the things we can see, the things we cannot see, such as thrones, kingdoms, rulers, authorities in the unseen world. Everything was created through Him and for Him. God the Father loves us so much that these three ways, this manger, the cross, and the crown, are the ways that Jesus has shown His great love to us. And through the manger, we see His presence. Through the cross, we see pardon. Through the crown, we see power. But not the power in the way we would typically use power today. Not in a selfish way, but to help people be connected with God. This is the power to bring all those prodigal children back to the Lord. This is the power to help people live life to the fullest today, knowing that they have eternity with Jesus.

These three ways, the manger, the cross and the crown. Speak these things to us every single day. And Jesus's presence is with me. His pardon is for me. His power is over me. Would you say this with me? His presence is with me. His pardon is for me. His power is over me. In all of this, you are greatly and dearly loved, and you are sent into the world to help other people see this and experience this as well. This is the power of God at work through you, to help others connect with Him.

Let me take it back to those days when I went off to Sunday school. The church that I grew up in, we would gather together, and we would sing a couple songs to start. But then all the kids would leave, and they would go

to Sunday school after that so we missed the pastor's really long sermon. When we came back, people were either still excited, ready to take notes, or they were kind of sleeping back there, depending on the day and how hot it was in the sanctuary. We would come back, and we had just sang all these songs. And all the kids would just be rowdy. They were excited. They had just done all these things. They were getting ready for donuts after church, all that. And they come to the sanctuary. They were so excited and rowdy. And you know, everybody sat in there did not shush them because they knew that this was the joy of the Lord, that this was the power of God at work in their midst, that their young ones amongst them were building this foundation on the love of Jesus. And where does that love go? It seeps out through us through joy. Where else can we be joyful than in this place? There is no other place like the House of the Lord to have and be joyful, because when it happens here, guess what happens to you when you leave. That joy carries out, and it goes into your other relationships in the places where you go.

And that is how we are sent with the Lord to the people around us. One of the things Jesus did for His people right before He ascended to heaven was, He went to them, and He opened up the scriptures to them. The people were wondering who Jesus is, what this is going to mean for our lives, what are they supposed to do with this knowledge they had that Christ has been raised from the dead, that He is real, that He is right here before us.

And what he does is He points them back to the scriptures. He pointed them back to the Bible, and He opened their minds to see it in a new way. This new way was all focused on Him. All the promises that had been there were now made true in Him.

It was written long ago that the Messiah Jesus would suffer and die, rise from the dead. And the third day, and they saw that was true. It happened right before their eyes. And so, what Jesus said then was "Go. Knowing that you are loved, knowing that the presence of God is with you, knowing that the pardon of God is for you, knowing that the power of God is over, you go into all the world and proclaim this with great joy, because you are free to do so. You are all witnesses of these things." That is *you* plural in the Greek. It does not come across in the regular translation. It is you all are witnesses of all these things. So now go and share them.

Do you appreciate when people share things with you with treachery or with joy? If they share them with you because they are embarrassed about it or because their lives have really been changed and they have found joy and peace, I think we know the answer to this. Today, I send you out from here as witnesses of Jesus's love for you, that He is with you, that He is for you, that His power goes with you. I send you here with joy so the people that you see, they will catch onto that and wonder exactly where and what foundation you have built your life on so that they would see Jesus and return to Him and know that they too are loved.

Let's close in prayer. Heavenly Father, today you have brought us here together in this place, that whether we are in this room here physically or we are together online, wherever we are, Lord, you have reminded us that we are greatly and dearly loved.

That your son Jesus has gone to the cross for us and paid for our sins and given us life today to be lived as we will live in eternity. So Lord, let us go from this place with joy, with great peace, with great confidence that we are loved and let that joy spread amongst the people that we see each and every day that they too will see you and know how much they are loved.

All this we pray in the name of Jesus. Amen.