JM Jason Mayfield

SERMON OUTLINE FOR PASTORS

THE TRINITY

One God in Three Persons, and Why It Makes Salvation Certain

> The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit have worked together since eternity past to save us, so the promise of salvation does not rest on us. It is guaranteed.

MAIN TEXT
Colossians 1:15-20

FIRST PREACHED
August 31, 2025

SERIES
We're Building Everything on Jesus, Week 4 of 4

BY
Pastor Jason Mayfield

AT A GLANCE

THE MESSAGE

1. The word Trinity is not in the Bible, but the doctrine is: Trinity is a label applied to what Scripture demonstrates repeatedly, the way the word spice names what is in the drawer without being in the drawer.
2. The definition: God eternally exists as three persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; each person is fully God, there is one God, and God is always all three persons at once.
3. Church history clarified this under pressure: Nicaea in 325 answered Arius on the deity of the Son, Constantinople in 380-381 answered the spirit fighters on the deity of the Spirit, and doctrine generally gets defined when false teaching forces the question.
4. The New Testament portrays the Trinity plainly in Matthew 3:16-17, 2 Corinthians 13:14, Ephesians 4:4-6, and Matthew 28:19.
5. The Old Testament already carries it: in the Shema, Yahweh, a singular name, is paired with Elohim, a plural word for God, and with echad, a collective one, and Genesis 1 with Job, John, Colossians, and Hebrews assigns creation to Father, Son, and Spirit.
6. The doctrine of the Trinity protects believers from heresy, specifically the teaching of the Mormons and the Jehovah's Witnesses, whose Jesus is a created being and therefore cannot save.
7. The Trinity is what makes salvation possible: in Abraham's story the Father promises (Genesis 12), the Son cuts the covenant while Abraham sleeps (Genesis 15), and the Spirit seals it in the sign of circumcision (Genesis 17), and only when all three have done their work does the promised son arrive.

WATCH IT PREACHED

youtu.be/vKzBOMsVhfM

READ THE ARTICLE

jasonmayfield.com/messages/the-trinity

PREACHING NOTES

Before You Preach

This message closes a four-week series on building everything on Jesus. It is a doctrine message, and it will lean into teaching. Say so up front, then keep the energy up: the payoff in the final movement is personal and powerful.

Two cautions. First, every illustration of the Trinity breaks down (water, ice and steam ends in modalism), so this message proclaims more than it illustrates. Second, it names two groups, Latter-day Saints and Jehovah's Witnesses, as outside Christian orthodoxy. Say it plainly, and say it with an open door.

Introduction

> COLOSSIANS 1:15-20 ESV
>
> 15 He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. 16 For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. 17 And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. 18 And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent. 19 For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, 20 and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.

Today we are talking about the Trinity, one of the most important doctrines in the Christian faith. This is not a "think better, do better" message. It is heavy, and it is powerful: by the end, you will see how our one God in three persons secures the promise of God in your life.

Paul admits his own limits when he writes, "I am speaking in human terms, because of your natural limitations" (Romans 6:19). And God says His ways and thoughts are higher than ours (Isaiah 55:8-9). If His ways are above ours, it stands to reason that His nature is above our full comprehension. So this morning there will be more proclaiming than explaining.

WHAT THE WORD MEANS

The word Trinity is not found in the Bible. Some use that as an argument against it, but many sound theological words are not in the Bible. Trinity is a label the church gives to something Scripture demonstrates again and again.

Illustration: the spice drawer. Open the spice drawer at home and you will find cinnamon, lemon pepper and a little Tony Chachere's. Nothing in the drawer is labeled "spice." Spice is the word that tells you

what is in the drawer. In the same way, Trinity is the word that names what Scripture shows us throughout: one God who is three persons.

The cornerstone of Christian orthodoxy is the Trinity.

Definition: God eternally exists as three persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Each person is fully God. There is one God. And God is always all three persons at once.

1. The Church Affirmed the Trinity Under Pressure

Most doctrine is put into words because a false teaching forces the question. Nobody had to defend the deity of Jesus until someone denied it.

AD 325, the Council of Nicaea. About 300 church leaders gathered to affirm the full deity of Jesus Christ. A bishop named Arius had been teaching that the Son was a created being and that there was a time when He did not exist. The council answered with Scripture:

> JOHN 1:1 ESV
>
> [1] In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

Fourteen verses later, John tells us who the Word is: “the Word became flesh and dwelt among us” (John 1:14). The Word is Jesus.

AD 381, the Council of Constantinople. A second council affirmed the deity of the Holy Spirit against the Pneumatomachians, literally “Spirit fighters,” who denied that the Spirit is God.

Between these two councils the church set down, as orthodox Christian doctrine, that the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are coequal, of the same divine substance, and coeternal: not created, but eternal. The creed that came out of those councils, known today as the Nicene Creed, says it this way:

> We believe in one God, the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all things visible and invisible.
>
> And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten from the Father before all ages, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made; of the same essence as the Father. Through him all things were made. For us men and for our salvation he came down from heaven; he became incarnate by the Holy Spirit and the virgin Mary, and was made man. He was crucified for us under Pontius Pilate; he suffered and was buried. The third day he rose again, according to the Scriptures. He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again with glory to judge the living and the dead. His kingdom will never end.
>
> And in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who with the Father and the Son together is worshiped and glorified, who spoke through the prophets.
>
> And in one holy catholic and apostolic Church. We confess one baptism for the forgiveness of sins. We look forward to the resurrection of the dead, and to life in the world to come. Amen.

If that were all you knew about the Christian faith, you would be off to a good start. But the Trinity was not invented in the 300s. It is a Bible doctrine.

2. The New Testament Clearly Portrays the Trinity

Four passages put all three persons side by side. As you read each one, name the persons aloud.

> **MATTHEW 3:16-17** ESV
>
> [16] And when Jesus was baptized, immediately he went up from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened to him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming to rest on him; [17] and behold, a voice from heaven said, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased."

The Son is baptized, the Spirit descends, the Father speaks.

> **2 CORINTHIANS 13:14** ESV
>
> [14] The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

The grace of the Son, the love of the Father, the fellowship of the Spirit.

> **EPHESIANS 4:4-6** ESV
>
> [4] There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call —[5] one Lord, one faith, one baptism, [6] one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

One Spirit, one Lord, one God and Father of all.

> **MATTHEW 28:19** ESV
>
> [19] Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,

The most concise picture of the Trinity in the New Testament. Have the congregation say it together: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

3. The Old Testament Also Reveals the Trinity

The Shema is the core creed of Judaism. It is the first prayer Jewish children learn, and it is recited morning and evening. (It is also the text behind the second of the Assemblies of God's 16 Fundamental Truths, "The One True God.")

> **DEUTERONOMY 6:4** ESV
>
> 4 "Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one.

Put the verse on screen and walk through four words:

- **Shema**, "Hear." A command, given to a people surrounded by many gods: you need to hear this.
- **Yahweh**, "the LORD." The personal, singular name God gave Himself among all the gods of the nations.
- **Elohim**, "our God." A plural form, like seraph and seraphim, cherub and cherubim.
- **Echad**, "one." Not a counting one, but a united, collective one. It is the word used when Adam and Eve "become one flesh" (Genesis 2:24) and when the builders at Babel are "one people" (Genesis 11:6).

Elohim, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, is echad, one united God, Yahweh. Millennia before Bethlehem, God was already painting this picture.

Who created the world? Scripture gives the work to all three persons:

- The Father: "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth" (Genesis 1:1).
- The Son: "All things were made through him" (John 1:3; also Colossians 1:16 and Hebrews 1:2-3).
- The Spirit: "By his wind the heavens were made fair" (Job 26:13).

One more observation, offered as interest rather than proof: the first three Hebrew words of the Bible are *bereshit bara Elohim*, "In the beginning, created God." The third word of Scripture is the plural Elohim.

As the hymn writer said, "God in three persons, blessed Trinity."

4. The Trinity Protects Us from Heresy

The doctrine of the Trinity is a cornerstone of orthodoxy, and it guards us against false teaching. Two groups are worth naming, because they are coming to your door.

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormons) teaches that:

- the Father was once a man who became a god;
- Jesus is divine, but a spirit child of the Father and a heavenly mother;
- the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are three separate gods among countless gods, and you too can become a god.

Jehovah's Witnesses teach that:

- only the Father is God (a unitarian view);
- Jesus is not God, but a created being, identified with Michael the archangel;

- the Holy Spirit is not God and not a person, but an impersonal force.

This is very close to the Arianism the Council of Nicaea answered in 325.

Be clear and be kind: neither group is Christian in the historic, biblical sense. They profess a different Christ, and their teaching about Him is a damnable heresy. If you believe Jesus is not God, you believe in a Jesus who cannot save you. Then open the door: if you are part of either group, you have a place here, and we will walk with you through what Scripture says.

OPTIONAL: THE TRINITY AND THE CROSS

This section is in the original notes but was not preached on August 31, 2025. Use it if time allows.

Our very real sin problem was solved at a very real cross. Jesus paid the price for our sin. This is called penal substitutionary atonement.

Some teachers now separate the cross from the Trinity, and when they do, the cross starts to look like "cosmic child abuse": an angry Father punishing an innocent Son. But the Father and the Son are coequal and coeternal, and at the cross they acted in perfect cooperation. Separate the cross from the Trinity, and God no longer looks just in requiring payment for sin. He looks vindictive toward His innocent Son.

The slide that follows is predictable. Teachers begin to:

- recast the cross as answering our misunderstanding of God's wrath rather than satisfying His justice;
- set aside large parts of the Old Testament, then deny the inerrancy of Scripture;
- apply salvation to all people apart from faith, and set aside much of the New Testament;
- move from Christ as Lord to Christ as a consciousness, equal to other religious leaders;
- end in unitarianism, many paths to God, and truth that is entirely subjective.

All because the Trinity was separated from the cross. Whether we realize it or not, the Trinity is the glue that holds the Christian faith together.

5. The Trinity Makes Salvation Certain

We have a righteousness that comes by faith, modeled by Abraham. Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness (Romans 4:3; Galatians 3:6; James 2:23). That is how we are born again: we place our faith in the finished work of Jesus at the cross.

Walk the congregation through Abraham's story in three scenes. No need to put every text on screen.

Genesis 12: the Father promises. Abraham worships the Lord, but he and Sarah cannot have children, and he fears his inheritance will pass to a servant. God promises to make him a great nation and to bless the nations through him.

Genesis 15: the Son cuts the covenant. Years later, the Lord renews the promise, and Abraham believes God, and it is counted to him as righteousness. Abraham asks, "How am I to know?" So God calls for a covenant. In that day, two parties would cut animals in half and walk between the pieces, saying in effect, "If I break my word, let this be done to me." Abraham prepares the animals, and then God causes a deep sleep to fall on him. A smoking fire pot and a flaming torch pass between the pieces while Abraham sleeps.

Compare Revelation 1:14-15, where the risen Christ's eyes are "like a flame of fire" and His feet "like burnished bronze." Many see Genesis 15 as an appearance of the Son before His incarnation. God leaves Abraham out of the covenant's obligations, because what we add to God's promise is "weakened by the flesh" (Romans 8:3). This is not a covenant between God and a man. It is a covenant between the Father and the Son.

> **ROMANS 4:16 ESV**
>
> 16 That is why it depends on faith, in order that the promise may rest on grace and be guaranteed to all his offspring—not only to the adherent of the law but also to the one who shares the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all,

If the promise depends on us, it is never guaranteed. When it rests on a covenant between the Father and the Son, it is certain.

Genesis 17: the Spirit seals. God tells Abraham, "Walk before me, and be blameless," and Abraham falls on his face: he cannot do it. So God gives him a sign, circumcision, a "seal of the righteousness that he had by faith" (Romans 4:11). The Old Testament patterns are a shadow of what was to come (Colossians 2:16-17; Hebrews 10:1), and this one points to believers being "sealed with the promised Holy Spirit" (Ephesians 1:13).

The work of the Father in Genesis 12. The work of the Son in Genesis 15. The work of the Holy Spirit in Genesis 17. And once all three have done their part, Sarah conceives, and within a year the promised son is born (Genesis 21:1-2).

Conclusion

When God in three persons does His unique work in your life, the promise is made sure, and it will come to pass.

The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit have worked together since eternity past to save you from your sins.

- The Father **planned** our salvation.
- The Son **purchased** our salvation.
- The Spirit **preserves** our salvation.

Restate the definition one last time: God eternally exists as three persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Each person is fully God. There is one God. And God is always all three persons at once.

Close in praise: if you are thankful to serve a God who is bigger than your mind can hold, give Him praise.



ABOUT

PASTOR JASON MAYFIELD

Pastor Jason Mayfield is the Senior Pastor of Citylight Church in Saraland, Alabama, an author, and the creator of POWER 27. He has given more than 20 years to the local church and helps pastors and ministry leaders lead BIG.

Free outlines, articles and leadership resources:
jasonmayfield.com

You are welcome to preach from this outline. Scripture quotations are from the ESV® Bible (The Holy Bible, English Standard Version®), © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved. www.esv.org