



St. Michael's Church
CHARLESTON, SC

TRINITY SUNDAY
SUNDAY, MAY 27, 2018

HAGGAI 1:3-9
MATTHEW 28:18-20

PREACHER: THE REV. AL ZADIG, JR.

HELP US LORD TO BE SO CONNECTED TO YOU THAT WE MIGHT BECOME THE SERVANTS OF OTHERS.

TAKE OUR LIPS AND SPEAK THROUGH THEM,
OUR MINDS AND THINK THROUGH THEM,
AND TAKE OUR HEARTS, AND SET THEM ON FIRE

This morning I want to take you to S-Feldman Housewares, located on the Upper East side of Manhattan. It is the crème-del-la-crème of Kitchen Gadgets! Penelope Green, writing about it in the *New York Times*, describes this 89 year old store as a “glittering impresario of kitchen accessories,” of which Americans spend 11 billion a year! There is my favorite gizmo, The Beep-Egg. You put it in the eggs as they are boiling, and when the eggs are done, the beep egg from the water plays a tune called *Killing me softly*. But they have a whole section of gadget knives. For instance, The Spread-THAT titanium knife, which uses the heat of your hands to warm the butter as you spread it. The Flexicado, which takes apart an avocado quicker than you can eat one. The Pushberry can slice strawberries in one movement. The Swiftstrip is a special knife that strips kale leaves. Who knew kale had to be stripped? But in a moment of pure transparency, the owner of Feldmans, said, “Truth be told, all these things you can do with a simple knife..!!!” Just buy a knife!

There is a theological connection here. As we deal with all the chaos in our world today, school shooting after school shooting, polarizing politics, pre-mature teen deaths, Opioid addictions gone viral, lava flowing in Hawaii, and Churches waiting on court decisions, what I find as I scan our culture is that to deal with all these pressures and challenges, folks are increasingly looking into all kinds of gizmo's and gadgets to simply deal. Things like drugs, alcohol, video gaming, and binge watching. Spiritual Gizmos like eastern religions, horoscopes, you name it. As the Feldman's owner broke it all down saying “just buy a knife,” I find myself saying. “Just go back to the Trinity!” Yes, the Trinity! On this Trinity Sunday we remember we are not clueless, or powerless, in our shifting sands culture. The Trinity is actually a practical way of dealing with the chaos and uncertainty of life!

In Matthew 28, we find the last earthly words of Jesus, therefore we really need to pay extra attention. Jesus to the disciples says, "This is my final word to you. Go and make disciples of every nation, baptizing the world in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit!" The Father, Son and Holy Spirit make up the Trinity, the identity of God! Quick analogy: if you've been to Pittsburgh, you know three rivers flow through it. The Allegheny joins with the Monongahela to form the Ohio River. In the same way, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit flowing together make up the Godhead! God is our creator, the creator of all things. God is our redeemer, through Jesus saving us from sin. God is the Holy Spirit, living in us as our fuel, to shape us into the image of Himself!
Father-Son-Holy Spirit!

As I look at our culture, there is so much suffering, and so many who believe violence, suicide, and hopelessness is their only way out. And I wonder, Do they, Do we, Do you, know you are created by God who knows you more than you know yourself, or do you think you are an independent island? Who can forget Jeremiah 1:5, "Before you were in the womb I knew you, before you were born I set you apart!" Think about that, let that sink in again! God the Creator.

Do they, Do we, Do you know you can be saved from your sin within? The Grace of Jesus Christ, that one way love of Jesus who died to take away our guilt, regret, things said, things thought and never said, deep inner shame and pain? All of that can be forgiven as if it never happened! Is it known in our world that there is an outlet for our brokenness? And does the world know that for the believer in Jesus, we will live forever with Him, even after we die? That we will see those children again in heaven, those children who died to early? God the Son.

Do they, Do we, Do you know you don't have to live life in your own strength, your own striving, but instead can live life through the fuel of the Holy Spirit which is our high octane gasoline? God the Holy Spirit.

My friends, if you are here this morning feeling like that anvil of anxiety and stress is encamped on your shoulders, give it to the Father who created you, Jesus who died to take it from you, and give it to the Holy Spirit that is your fuel line. God is still in charge, let the world know what you are for! Jesus said go and make disciples of all nations. This is what Disciples do! Disciples tell the world, we are for God the Father who knows us intimately because He created us! We are for His Son Jesus Christ, the great savior from sin. We are for The Holy Spirit that burns away the chaff, convicts us of sin, and sets us on the right path again.

On this Memorial Day weekend, we need to remember the men and women who have died while serving in the military, yes abundantly yes. We also need to remember and invite others into the power of the Trinity: God the Father's stabilizing force, the selfless love of Jesus who died that we might live forgiven, and guilt-free lives, and the Holy Spirit living here! Forget the gadgets, just use the Trinity!

As a nation, it seems we are looking everywhere else for solace but the GODHEAD THREE IN ONE AND ONE IN THREE. A nation so distracted. But I see the problem less out in the world, I see the problem right here. Back to Matthew, Jesus said, Go and make Disciples of all, baptizing them in the Name of the Father-Son- and Holy Spirit. If we are not evangelizing and discipling our culture into that Trinity, if we aren't offering our friends and neighbors that insight into the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, how on earth could we expect our culture to reflect the power of the Trinity? Who my friends, are you discipling? Could it be that the global Church itself has become distracted from its central mission?

Enter the Prophet Haggai. We really don't know much about this Old Testament prophet, but we do know he's wise in years, about 70 years old when he makes his prophecies, and his distracted nation needed it. You see, way back in 586 BC, the armies of Babylon had destroyed the temple in Jerusalem. Forty-eight years later, King Cyrus decreed that Jews could return to their beloved City of Jerusalem and rebuild their temple. So the Jews leave Babylon and begin working on the building. They lay a foundation and one row of stones, then a couple of things happen. They get major pushback on the temple by the Samaritans. A drought hits. Discouragement sets in that produces apathy, which stops the work. They drop the work to instead restore and build their own homes. For 15 years the Temple lays in ruins. Haggai's purpose from God is to tell the Jews: Get busy and build the Lord's house! Haggai pierces their apathy with these words, "Is it a time for you yourselves to be living in paneled houses while the temple of God remains a ruin? Give careful thought to your ways." A phrase repeated five times in this slim two chapter book! Is it time for us to be living in paneled homes while the spiritual lives of a nation lie in ruins? Haggai says y'all are so wrapped up in your own affairs you have put God's work second and your own needs first. Ray Stedman teaching on Haggai challenges us when he writes, "How can we find time to advance our own interests so eagerly, so carefully, so thoughtfully, spending so much time thinking about advancing our own lives and then excuse ourselves from the work of building the house of God by saying: "I have no time!"

We're not talking about the physical building but the building up of God's house through Disciple-Making! My friends, there is such excitement that comes into our lives when we genuinely put the affairs of God first. When we can put down our phones at the beginning & end of the day, shut down all the news bleeps, open up Scripture, and say, "Lord, I'm listening, who are you calling me to reach?" Which is why notice this, Haggai doesn't name all the exterior forces keeping the temple from being built. He names the internal forces of sin, in the form of distraction, apathy and idolatry!

If we are devoted to self, If we're not discipling in the name of the Trinity, the world will never know there is more to life than the gadgets they see. They will not know they are created by God the Father, can be saved by Jesus the Son, and can be lived in and guided through the Holy Spirit. If we're too distracted, who will tell the world?

Therefore I think Haggai and the Apostle Paul would have been great partners in the Gospel. Haggai presents the challenge, Paul presents a solution to this problem of

distraction. Paul writes in his first note to the Corinthians, Chapter 12 Message version, “Remember how you were, when you didn’t know God? Led from one thing to another, never knowing what you were doing just because everybody else did it? It’s different in the Christian life. God wants to use our intelligence, all of ourselves to build up the kingdom. Therefore God’s gifts are handed out everywhere **while originating in** God’s Spirit.” Paul continues, “Each person is given something to do that shows who God is, and Everyone benefits! The gifts of teaching, healing the sick, tongues, are handed out one by one by the one Spirit of God, to help the world know there is another way!”

Okay, how on earth might we find out what our gifts are? **I mean if we are to take Haggai’s word and begin to rebuild the temple of people’s hearts**, where do we begin? Today, in the spirit of Paul, we’ll be giving you a Holy Spirit gifts assessment. After you complete it, it will help you discern what your gifts are, and how they can be unwrapped and used to tell the world there is another way! You can fill it out later today online or pick up a hardcopy after church. Fill it out today, bring it back to church next week and we will help you process it! Our Catechism gives us two purposes for the Gifts of the Holy Spirit, to Build up the Church, and to transform the World! Your gifts are not meant to be put on a shelf never to be unwrapped, but to be used for others. To tell the world, “I know of a better way! Live this Trinitarian life with me!” I’m not an island to myself where I have to make up my own reality. Because of the grace of God I can be forgiven of even the most rotten thing I’ve done! I don’t have to lead a life of loneliness! Are you willing? Than just take that assessment as one small step. Here is the good news: Haggai is the only prophet in Scripture to see His dream fulfilled! Yes, the Jews would mobilize to build that temple! More Good news, the very last words of Jesus are these: “Behold I am with you always to the end of the age, you will never be alone, just trust Me!”

I end with this. I want to take you to the book of Acts Chapter 8. God’s angel speaks to Philip, “At noon today I want you to walk over to that desolate road that goes from Jerusalem down to Gaza.” Philip does and sees an Ethiopian eunuch coming down the road. The Eunuch is riding in a chariot and reading the prophet Isaiah. The Holy Spirit tells Philip, “Run after the Chariot.” Running up alongside the chariot, Philip hears the Eunuch reading Isaiah and asks, pant-pant, “Do you understand what you’re reading?” The Eunuch answers, “How can I without some help? Come in and explain this to me.” Philip climbs in, and using that passage as his text, simply begins teaching about Jesus. As he does, they come to a stream of water. The Eunuch says, “Here’s water. Why can’t I be baptized?” They both go down to the water, and Philip baptizes him on the spot! The Eunuch was as happy as he could be.

Forget the Flexicado, forget the Pushberry, let’s use our gifts to tell the world they don’t need spiritual gizmos, just the power of the Trinity. It begins today...