My Brothers and Sisters in Christ, let us pray. Lord God of our Pentecost Hearts, Minds, Spirits, and Souls, may the words of my mouth and the meditation of all of our hearts always be acceptable in your sight, our strength and our redeemer, Amen.

We’ve said before that John’s Gospel presents Jesus’ divinity front and center. It is different. John’s Gospel does NOT say: If you believe, then God will love you and save you. God's salvation is not a reward for belief.

Nor does God withhold God's love, forgiveness and salvation until we believe. On the other hand, since love is something given to and not taken from, it’s not coercive. So we do have to accept the invitation in order to actually be part of God’s family fulfilling the promises of the Kingdom of God.

John’s Gospel also makes clear what we celebrate on Trinity Sunday: neither the Spirit nor Jesus can be separated from God. Both come from “above,” and both are manifestations of God’s truth and revelation of God’s purpose. God loves the world beyond measure. The Gospel of John is rich with language exploring the relationship between God, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. It should probably come with a warning sign: “Multiple interpretations possible.” This is what gets Protestants into trouble, isn’t it?

The goal of John’s community and gospel, however, is not to establish doctrine. It is to tell a story about God’s love for the world. In our story of Nicodemus, the language of God, Son, and Spirit reveals unity of purpose in the full expression of God’s interaction with the world. It’s the reason for Trinity Sunday. So let’s look at these relationships a little further.

**Nicodemus**

The story of Nicodemus hearkens back to the first chapter of John, where it says that the world came into being through the Word, but the world did not know it. This is exactly what we find illustrated in the story of Nicodemus. Nicodemus says to Jesus, “We know you are a teacher who comes from God,” but Jesus responds in a way that turns what Nicodemus thinks he knows on its head, leaving him mostly confused.

It is helpful to keep in mind that John often uses irony to underline a point. This is the case here. Nicodemus has, in fact, said something that is true, but without recognizing fully the significance of what he says. He grows in understanding, coming later after Jesus’ death to the tomb bearing spices to assist preparing the body for burial. In the Gospel of John, insight only comes through the raising of questions, which is a central tenet of our faith. We see God moments most often in hindsight, not in real time. We need to be able to synthesize our faith through remembrance and reflection, or as the Methodists so famously say, through not just scripture and tradition, but reason and experience.

**The World**

The “world” is the object of God’s concern in the Gospel of John. Despite having been created through the Word, the world has come under the sway of a ruler, one devoid of truth and thus the antithesis of Jesus, who embodies truth. The world is a place where things and patterns that are not God’s thrives.

Yet even while the world is under the control of the ruler, it is possible for people to be in the world but not of the world; we are still, and can become, children of God if we have the courage to testify to the Light.

**The Kingdom of God**

There are more than 50 references to the world in the Gospel of John. But the phrase “the kingdom of God” appears in only two verses in the Gospel, which describe the kingdom as something that can be seen and entered. The emphasis on “place” underscores that the kingdom of God and the world constitute separate things, though they are related.

**The Spirit**

Just as John distinguishes between the kingdom of God and the world, so John also distinguishes between the Spirit and flesh. Flesh is not necessarily negative, but it belongs to the world. The Spirit, in John, is described in three ways:

• Like Jesus, the Spirit comes from above, the realm of God, and it blows where it will. It belongs to God.

• Like Jesus, the Spirit is Truth.

• The Spirit is an Advocate, whom Jesus asks God to give to the community of faith, to teach, testify to, and remind them of what Jesus has said to them.

**The Son**

Nicodemus describes Jesus as a teacher who has come from God; in other words, who stands in the presence of God. While Nicodemus’s words are true, but what he does not yet comprehend is more important:

• First, Jesus is not just a teacher, but has seen God, speaks the word of God, and is one with God.

• Second, Jesus has been sent into the world by God (for example in order to ge the light of the world, save the world, and give life to the world.

• Last, Jesus is the means by which God reaches out to the world, entering into the world as flesh so that what is flesh may receive the Spirit of God.

So what does all this mean for our living this day, as we kick back and relax celebrating a day off in the World? I’ll leave you with these final thoughts.

St. Anselm famously said his life’s work represented “faith seeking understanding”. Many folks think Anselm hopes to replace faith with understanding. And that would be really convenient, right? If only we could gain enough knowledge, we could convince ourselves of God.

But God doesn’t work like that. It’s bigger than that.

Neither the Spirit nor Jesus can be separated from God. Both come from “above,” and both are God’s truth and speak to God’s purpose. God loves the world beyond measure. God “gave” Jesus to save the world from itself: an expression of generosity, not a “handing over”. The unity of purpose reflects Jesus saying that he lays down his life of his own accord (“so that the world may know that you have sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me”).

The Holy Spirit, as Advocate, both testifies that the words of Jesus are from God and eternally advocates for us, right here, right now, GCCC. The Spirit is alive in our community of faith in the world so we may continue to abide in God’s love forever.

What then is faith seeking understanding? Perhaps it means “an active love of God seeking a deeper knowledge of God.” God in all its wonderful, beautiful parts, the God who pervades our world, its creation, its nature and each of our souls. We need these aspects and essences to sustain us. At least for me, I lost count long ago in terms of God’s revelation in my life, and I hope yours faith is bigger than our triune God is defined. God would love that.

Thanks be to God, Amen.