

The Blood That Is Shared

Let us pray. Lord Jesus, your blood was shed for the sins of the whole world even without our prayer, but we pray that it may be shed for us also. May your blood be upon us and our children. Amen.

It's hard to believe, but it's been a whopping 17 years since Shrek tried to teach Donkey a lesson about ogres. (Pardon me if you don't remember this reference. It's been awhile, but I have a feeling a lot of us might) "Ogres are like onions," Shrek says. "They stink?" Donkey replies. "No," Donkey jumps back in, "Or they make you cry," Exasperated, Shrek says, "No! Layers. Onions have layers. Ogres have layers. You get it? We both have layers." (and he walks away frustrated) What Shrek didn't get is that while ogres may have layers (that is, ogres are complex), analogies always have downfalls. No analogy is perfect. You take what you can get from the analogy and don't extend it too far.

Now there's no perfect way to *explain* the Trinity, especially with analogies. It's best to avoid the apples and the shamrocks or the three forms of water. The general rule is to just avoid analogies altogether with the Trinity. Best to simply confess it as God has revealed Himself to us: Three persons, one substance, one essence. This boggles the mind, yet is true. On this side of the resurrection, we will always be plagued with weakness in understanding the divine things of God (like the Trinity). But that doesn't mean we can't comprehend certain ways God works. It doesn't mean we ought to keep our minds from wrapping around what God *has* revealed. Doesn't mean that we shouldn't always *learn* ever more the Scriptures. But our sin keeps us from *fully* comprehending the divine mysteries of God. In many cases, God doesn't say "*fully understand this*" as much as he says "this is the way it is. Believe it." For example, God tells you "Jesus was born of a virgin Mary, being conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit. I, God, know to you that doesn't make sense. But it's what happened. I'm God and I can do it and I did do it. Believe it."

But on the other hand, we also don't leave our brains at the door. God uses our rational minds that he's given us. But it's important for us to remember that our brains are to be kept in check by the Scriptures, not the Scriptures being kept in check by our brains. Where our natural understanding conflicts with what we are reading in the Scriptures, we confess the problem is not with God's Word, but with our own understanding, with our own brains still weak in sin.

So what makes God God? We often hear these things: omnipotent (all-powerful), omnipresent (all-present), omniscient (all-knowing). Yeah, those are good. But let's think in

Athanasian Creed terms though: the Father's uncreated, the Son uncreated, the Holy Spirit uncreated. The Father infinite, eternal, almighty, and Lord. The Son likewise: infinite, eternal, almighty, and Lord. The Holy Spirit? Same thing: infinite, eternal, almighty, and Lord. Yet there are not three uncreateds or three infinities, but one infinite. One created. Not three Lords, but one Lord. And so on.

So we have in mind what makes the one essence of *God*, but think also on how the three persons of the Trinity also have their distinctives: The Father's not begotten. Only the Son is begotten. Only the Son became incarnate as Jesus. The Holy Spirit's neither created nor begotten, but proceeding. The Holy Spirit has the title of the *Comforter* and at times appears as a dove and interacts *closely* with breath in the Scriptures. The Holy Spirit is the primary person we attribute the *inspiration* or *breath-ification* of the Holy Scriptures.

The Father? He's the *source* of the Trinity. Clearly the head. Clearly the one who's in authority over the Son and the Holy Spirit...much like an earthly father over an earthly son. Yet like how an earthly father and an earthly son are two different persons, so is the heavenly eternal Father and the heavenly eternal son two different persons. And like how I and my son, Peter, share the same *essence* of humanity, so too does our heavenly Father share the same *essence* as the heavenly Son: that of God. You and I? We share in the essence of humanity. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit? They share in the essence of *God*.

Here I'm breaking my own rule of no analogies for the Trinity. I admit it's still not the best. Jesus says that He and the Father are one. I'd never say that my son and I are one. Jesus also says that if you've seen me then you've seen the Father, but I'd never say that if you've seen Peter then you've seen me. But this analogy does help a bit. I'll say it one more time: You and I share in the same *essence* of humanity, while we are nonetheless distinct persons. The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit share in that same *essence* of God, while being nonetheless distinct persons. ^Still one God. We're not Tritheists, but Trinitarians.

So we talked about what makes God God. Now what makes man man? Two eyes? Yeah, but some are blind, even from birth. Two arms? Again, one can be amputated. But what is common to all people? Everyone has blood. No one can exist without blood, for life itself is in the blood. What is essential to humanity? Flesh and blood.

In Christ, God became man. In Christ, God took on flesh. In Christ, God the Son assumed a human heart which pumped real human blood. We don't know the specific blood type of Jesus,

but it's safe to say that His blood was universal. The same essential blood that flows through you and me was the same essential blood that flowed through Jesus. Blood that would scab over, like you and me. Blood that stains clothing, like you and me. When the Word became flesh, when God became man, human blood became united to God...the Son of God in Christ Jesus. That second person of the Trinity, He who is God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God, took the essence of humanity – blood – and made it essential to God.

What else is common to all men? We're all descendants of Noah, and Adam before that. Yet we all look quite different in many ways. Black, white, male, female, Arab, Israeli, rich, poor. Yet we are all descended from the same. We're all sons of Adam. But we're not all sons of God. At least, not at first.

Our first father, Adam, could rightly say that *he* was a son of God, being fashioned and given life from the dust of the earth and walking with God in the Garden. But Adam was banished from the garden, away from his Father when he rebelled against his father. As you are born likewise away from His presence, you, too, are born of flesh alone. But the *eternal* Son of God became a son of Adam, a son of flesh, a son with blood, so that children of Adam could likewise become children of God, not by the will of man, but by the gift of God.

The spiritual essence of God took on the physical essence of man, with blood flowing through the veins that is universal to all mankind, blood that flowed on earth, blood that was *shed* on earth, blood that flowed yet again on earth, and blood that now flows at the right hand of God the Father with the Holy Spirit to all eternity. Think about it. Human blood exists as we speak in the heavens. When Jesus ascended, He didn't leave His humanity behind, but took it with Him.

Now let's go back to the former question, what makes God God then? Father, Son, Holy Spirit, we covered that. One God in Trinity and Trinity in Unity. And that second person of the Trinity, still very God of very God, as much God as the Father is God and the Holy Spirit is God, but now also united to our humanity, so that we may have the unity in God that Jesus Himself enjoys. Because the blood that flows through the person of Christ is the same blood that flows through you, you *can* rightly become a child of God, a brother or sister of Christ, and of all of us united to Him.

But in this Lenten season, we want to remember that it's not *merely* this incarnation that unites us to God, but it's what that Word made flesh and blood *did*. He doesn't just share our

blood. He shares in our *suffering* so that we can share in His *glory*. He takes on all of our sin so that we can share in His holiness. He shares our death so that we can share in His victory over death. He shares our temptations to sin in every way but never falling to sin, so that he can atone for all the times when you've failed when tempted. He shares in our human family so that we can join in the family of God, and be brothers and sisters even of one another. It's a marvelous thing, really, to ponder on the ramifications of Christmas, the incarnation. But if Christmas was all we had, we'd still be no better off. It's what that baby Jesus grew up to do that makes Christmas worth celebrating.

For when He began his heroic quest, Christ had a target. He had an enemy. Our enemy, the devil. We often make light of the curse that was given to the devil in Eden compared to our own curses. Take Eve... Pain in childbearing? Well, daughters of Eve throughout history know very well that curse. And for the men? Eating bread by the sweat of our face from the thorns and thistles of the cursed ground? Sons of Adam likewise experience just how difficult that is to provide. The devil though? Remember: on your belly you shall go, eating dust. What kind of curse is that?

Ah, but that's only the first half of the curse. The seed of Eve shall crush the head of the evil one. Adam and Eve were cursed with immense pain and banishment from the Garden of Eden. The devil though? He was given a death sentence. To be carried out in time, but God's declared this to the devil: you may have had the upper hand in this garden, but your time is short. Your time will end. And your destruction, O serpent, will even come from the loins of the one you tempted. The death sentence was signed in Eden, sealed and delivered in Jesus.

<pause> Let's pause and reflect for a moment how the devil and his angels really became so evil and rebelled in the first place. The best explanation to the limited amount the Scriptures give is this: man was made in no less than the image of God to have dominion over all creation. Angels? They're created, but they have no body. They're spiritual. So even though we can't see them on this side of eternity, they're God's creation just as we are. Yet they were created for one purpose: to serve God by serving mankind. They weren't made in the image of God. Humanity was. Angels look after us now, and we will rule over them in heaven. Paul says this clearly in 1 Corinthians 9: that we saints will be judge over the angels. God clearly places humanity as the pinnacle of His creation, and this includes over the angels. So if we can imagine in the *Planet of the Apes* movies an advanced species of apes becoming jealous of humanity, imagine instead a

faction of angels having a similar jealousy. What do we have that the angels don't? Blood. Flesh. So the devil and his angels seek to drain the blood of life from as many men as they can. When the devil comes and attacks, that's him taking his anger against God out on you.

In the Garden, that ancient dragon had the upper hand and it so often seems like that today with being the last one laughing. Satan alone tempts, and the sin in our world, your very own sin, show he's still got some tricks up his sleeve. Especially it seems like the devil's in charge when we breathe our last and the blood stops flowing within us. But on the cross, Jesus went to battle, taking on the blood of humanity, not the form of an angel. For us went to fight the valiant one. With what weapon? Death itself. Substitutionary death. Atoning death. God sent His Son to be made flesh and blood and elected for the bloodthirsty devil to drain Jesus' blood. By so doing, that universal blood became poured out for many, thus destroying the devil and the power of death.

So have no fear. Because God has taken on your flesh and blood and with it died the death you deserve and was raised again for your justification, have no fear. The blood flowed through him yet again. The blood that will one day stop flowing in you will flow again in the resurrection. Just like Jesus. Be liberated from the fear of what's next, the fear of your dying days. Because He has sanctified you with the cleansing water that poured forth from the side of His body on the cross, have no fear. You're inheritors of His kingdom. You're heirs of the eternal life that you share with Jesus, your brother (your blood brother, you could say, through and through). And with Jesus as your brother, united to Him in Baptism, you have no less than God as your Father. You are a part of the love within the Trinity. Receive Him. Believe in His name. May His blood be upon you. May His blood be within you. [Morning: Participate in the blood of Christ with this cup of blessing] In Jesus' name. Amen.

Lent IV Midweek

Hebrews 2:10-18, Psalm 22:19-24, John 15:18-25

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