

I'm pretty sure that no Lutheran minister has ever heard words like these from someone in his congregation: "Pastor, why don't we confess the Athanasian Creed more often?" And if a church member ever did say such a thing, the other members would gang up on him and might even excommunicate him from the congregation.

Once a year, on the Sunday of the Holy Trinity, we confess this creed. And some may think that once a year is too often. Yet there is nothing better out there than this creed when it comes to teaching the doctrine of the Trinity. Notice that I say *teaching* it, not *explaining* it. After we confess this creed, we're not going to say: "Ah, now I get it! It finally makes sense to me how God is triune." No it doesn't. Some of you have confessed this creed for more than eighty years, and you still don't understand the Holy Trinity, how God is three in one.

God is too big for our puny brains. The Hebrews, at one time, forbade anyone under the age of thirty from, not only teaching, but even reading the first chapter of Genesis. I guess they figured that not only God, but also His work of creation is too deep for the younger ones to grasp.

What, though, if you're an apostle? One of Jesus' select group of disciples trained for the purpose of teaching the Christian Faith to all the nations? Surely they would grasp, better than most, the doctrine of God.

But did you hear, in our text, that one phrase that kind of jumped out at us? I'll read verses 16 and 17 again: "*Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. And when they saw Him they worshiped Him, but some doubted.*"

Some doubted! All eleven worship Jesus. But even as they worship, some of them are doubting. Thomas wasn't the only one, nor was he the last. These apostles, up on the mountain with Jesus, are most definitely not clearly stating, nor even believing, the doctrines taught by their Lord. Their minds are divided. They believe, but they also doubt. They are hesitating, not able to grasp everything that Jesus has taught and done.

So, you and I are in good company when we scratch our heads as we confess the Athanasian Creed, and the other creeds as well. Let's be clear about something. The Holy Spirit, sent to us by the Father and the Son, has His work cut out for Him. Within every single Christian, the Holy Spirit is engaged in the struggle between faith and unbelief.

And yes, it's a struggle, a real battle. But you and I are not left to endure this struggle on our own. We have the Holy Spirit as our teacher, our comforter. And He does what God is always doing. And that is this: He is moving. He is never static. He is always on the move. Moving, not away, but toward us. Toward His dear children who are constantly struggling.

As soon as we read in our text that *some doubted*, the very next thing we read is this: "*And Jesus came and spoke to them.*" He is on the move. Not away from His disciples, toward them. And as He moves toward them, He speaks to them. Not words like, "I should have chosen others to be

My disciples because, obviously, you eleven are not up to the task! You're doubting, you're hesitating, you're everything I'm not looking for in a disciple."

Jesus could have said these words, and not only to the eleven, but also to me. And I suppose to you as well. I'm not the disciple Jesus looks for either. Are you? I have doubts, yes, unbelief deep within my heart. Don't you? The struggle within me is very real, as I'm sure it is within you. Jesus would have every reason to move, not toward us, but away from us, and wash His hands of us.

But that's not what He does. He moved toward you in your baptism *in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit*. And ever since that day, He has been moving toward you. And not just moving to be with you always, but also speaking.

All authority belongs to Jesus, as He says to the eleven. Including the authority to make you His disciple through your baptism. And the authority to teach you everything He has done for you. And also this – the authority to forgive your sins.

Jesus doesn't make you His disciple because of what you can do for Him, but because of what He has done for you. Jesus teaches you everything that we confess in the creeds, even though we struggle in grasping most all of it. And then also, because He has all authority in heaven and on earth, He is able to forgive you, and He does forgive you.

You see, He was given all authority for the very reason that He laid down His life for you on the cross. Because He accepted this death for you, He is able to grant you life. And so, in your baptism He gives you life. And because sin is death, and we sin daily, He daily and richly forgives your sins, always restoring you to life.

I don't know if you can fit all this into your brain. But even if you can't, it's yours, because it's all a gift. Even a baptized infant, not grasping even one thing in the creeds within his or her unformed mind, has it all, because infants, too, can be given God's good gifts.

"All authority is given to Me," says Jesus. And so, He gives to you, and to all His dear children, every blessed gift that He has to give: forgiveness, life, and salvation. You don't have to understand it, just believe it. Amen.