

October 14, 2018 Ghost Stories Pt. 1 Genesis 1:1-3, Job 38:1-21

At the end of this month our culture will celebrate Halloween. As you know on the designated night, people will come to our doors seeking chocolate and other treats. They will dress up in costumes. When I was a child the charm of Halloween was that kids went out seeking treats from their neighbours. I mention this because I notice a shift. In Belleville, half of those who come to my door will be teenagers. And they are well behaved. But I also note that a shift has occurred where many young adults and young parents with babies in their arms have become part of the crowd. And of course there will be young children and school aged children as well.

Sixty years ago a lot of the costumes were ghosts. Some were witches in black garb. Most actually came to the door, or made the trek to the neighbours with masks on and no actual costumes at all. The merchandising of Halloween has changed all of that. Princesses, Princes, Movie characters, and Football players, and other sports celebrities will come to my door in search of "treats". And television will haul out old Frankenstein movies with Boris Karloff and others. Ghost stories will abound. And of course the new twist is Zombies.

In the "spirit" of late October, I am beginning a short series entitled Ghost Stories. The Apostle's Creed consists of three principal affirmations: "I believe in God, the Father Almighty creator of heaven and earth...I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord. And I believe in God the Holy Spirit." The original wording was "God the Holy Ghost," by which we meant the Spirit of God poured out upon the church at Pentecost, the church's only real power still. All the rest of the historic creeds wording are but expansions upon and details concerning these 3 fundamental statements.

Genesis, the book about the beginning of so many things that are part of life and fundamentally true, mentions the Holy Ghost, the Holy Spirit of God in the 3rd verse of the first chapter of Genesis. Genesis tells us that God created the heavens and the earth in the beginning. And it tells us that the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters as creation took place. Several things are thus told to us all at once.

The first thing we are told is about God's nature. His nature is different from ours. He is not like any part of the creation that was made by HIM in the beginning. He is not like the heavens and the earth. Rather HE is the Creator of the heavens and the earth. And what is more HE created the heavens and the earth, the waters, and the light, the earth and the stars, in the beginning. The Creator and the creation are very different. We are made from the dust, and it is to dust our physical beings return. Not so God. HE was there at the beginning, from before the beginning. His eternal nature is one of the reasons he was there at the beginning to create all that came into existence.

One of the realities of Biblical teaching, is the concept we call the Trinity: God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit. One God, known in three different ways. This is important. It is not true that the Church invented the Trinity. A Church Council did make a

definitive statement concerning what the Bible teaches about the Trinity. But in so doing the Church did not invent the concept, it recognized what the Holy Scripture teaches. We tend to call ourselves Christians. The Scriptures of the New Testament books in fact call us something else...disciples of Jesus. The Old Testament writings we inherited from the Hebrews, the Jews and ancient Israel. The idea of God's being 3 in 1, and 1 in 3, is as old as the 1st chapter of Genesis.

We need to be aware in this Ghost story, this Holy Ghost story that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are mentioned in verses 1 and 2 of the opening chapter of Holy Scripture. God created. The Holy Spirit hovered. And it was by the creative Word of power that God brought the various aspects of creation into existence. The disciple John saw this so clearly that when he wrote his account of the Gospel, John being a Jew, seeing the connection with Genesis 1 imitated its style to make a specific statement about Jesus. "In the beginning was the word, and the word was with God, and the word was God. He was with God in beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing that was made, that has been made."

Notice something about the text in our pew Bibles. If you turn to the first chapter of John each use of Word is capitalized, as God begins with a capital letter. That was not the case in the original text in Greek. My point is that the translators, scholars who followed Jesus, were so used to this insight that Jesus is the word of power in Genesis 1, that they capitalized it as they created this translation in English. And here is the important part. We cannot get behind a time when followers of Jesus understood the opening verses of Genesis 1 to be talking about God the Father Almighty, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.

I have said this before to many of you. It needs to be repeated in the context of this series about the Holy Spirit. Do not fall into the trap of making the concept of the trinity a complex concept that no one can understand. The ideas born in the concept of the Trinity are about experiencing God. So I ask you, how do you experience me? Obviously as a minister, a preacher, a church leader. Barbara on the other hand experiences me as a husband. She sees me, and experiences me in a very different light than you do. And then there is my son and daughter. Matthew calls me Dad. When we are together we hug every night before we go to bed. Rev. Rebekah calls me Daddy. When we are together we hug every night before we go to bed. My children's experience of me is very different from Barbara's. And both my children and my wife have very different experience of me than you do. Minister, husband, parent: three different ways of viewing me...accurate but different. Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

I believe in the God who created everything: the heavens and the earth. I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord, conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, suffered, crucified, dead and buried and risen the 3rd day. And I believe in the Holy Spirit. I am going to say this differently. It is all about experience. Moses experienced God the Father Almighty in his experience of the burning bush. HE changed Moses' life. The disciples whom we read about in the Gospels, and The Acts of the Apostles, experienced Jesus whom they knew as a teacher and friend for 3 years. HE changed their lives, as HE has changed ours. The

section of the Creed that begins "I believe in the Holy Spirit" is all about experience. The holy catholic Church (not a particular denomination but the Church). We experience the Spirit of God in the Church. We experience the Spirit of God in the "communion of saints", in being with believers, our brothers and sisters. We experience the Spirit of God when we experience the forgiveness of sins. We will experience the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting with God who is Father, and Son and Holy Spirit. Three in One and One in Three!

And you may be asking, "Why did he read from Job 38?" Good question. For this reason. Job 38 is the beginning of the story of Job's rebirth as a believer. He eventually says to God who created all that is including Job, who has been with him through all his troubles, even though unseen by Job till now... "My ears had heard of you, but now my eyes have seen you. Therefore I despise myself and repent in dust and ashes." (Job 42:4 & 5) It is about the experience we have of God's love and grace that takes us beyond trying to intellectually make sense of HIS nature. In this era, we experience God the Father, (Creator), and we experience Jesus (Saviour and Lord), because the Holy Spirit is in us and with us. He hovers over the experiences good and bad that we go through, and in the midst of which we find ourselves saying, "I believe."

Next week I will tell you a very different, Holy Ghost story.

Let us pray;

Lord God, we dare to describe you in words and thereby we endanger ourselves as fencing you in by the boundaries of human ideas. Come Holy Spirit, that we might truly appreciate the Father of Jesus and all that exists. Come Holy Spirit, that we might enjoy convictions about Jesus our Saviour and Lord. Come Holy Spirit. Change our nature. Make us more loving and more faithful, more faithful because of our capacity to love. Come Holy Spirit that the church might be for us, a circle of precious relationships in the midst of YOUR presence. Amen