



[Pastor Steven Billings](#)

Sermon for the Feast of the Holy Trinity
June 4, 2023

A Different Kind of Race

Matthew 28:16–20

¹⁶ Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. ¹⁷ And when they saw him they worshiped him, but some doubted. ¹⁸ And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹ Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

Every year around Memorial Day men and women surrounded by tons of expensive metal hurtle themselves around a track at more than 200 miles per hour in a race for a checkered flag, a pile of cash, and a jug of milk.

Next weekend gates will crash open and tons of expensive horseflesh will begin hurtling around a track, whipped by rather small men and women wearing colorful clothing, who ride them intent on being the first to cross the digital finish line for a pile of cash, hero status, and a blanket of white carnations.

Every four years the world’s best runners meet at a designated location, and upon the crack of a starter pistol, launch themselves around a track in short shorts, tank tops, and spiked shoes, vying to be the first to break the tape for screaming fans, corporate endorsements, and a shiny medal of gold, silver, or bronze.

I baptize you in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen! With these words a different kind of race begins. Countless people, as grains of sand on the seashore or stars in the heavens, of all shapes, colors, sizes, nations, and tongues, are sent forth into all the world, the world from which they came, already possessing all there is to have by the grace of God and restored through faith to be fully human and bearing the image of God once lost in sin. Yes, this race is different – much different – for it is a race whose outcome is never in doubt, whose champion is Christ, and which is finished before it even begins.

Oh, the participants, the baptized and beloved children of God, will certainly still experience the blood, sweat, and tears of dedicated preparation, of unexpected twists, turns, and even fights and crashes. It may be seemingly far too short, or woefully long. But this race is different because it is a race where you do not compete toward the finish line, but the finish line is brought to you. Though the race remains to be run for as long as we are given to live on this earth, the outcome is never in doubt. The salvation from your sins that gives you eternal life was finished by Christ on the cross and has been delivered to you through the water poured over your head, in the name of the Father and of the +



[Pastor Steven Billings](#)

Sermon for the Feast of the Holy Trinity
June 4, 2023

Son and of the Holy Spirit.

“With these words, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior, that having been justified by His grace we should become heirs according to the hope of eternal life” (Titus 3:5-7 NKJ).

In the name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Spirit. With these words we are given the image of God which we were intended to have from the beginning, when God created the first man and woman.

In the name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Spirit. With these words the image lost – as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned (Rom 5:12 NKJ) – becomes the image restored – so through one Man’s righteous act the free gift came to all men, resulting in justification of life (Rom 5:18 NKJ).

In the name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Spirit. With these words, we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection (Rom 6:4-5 NKJ).

In the name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Spirit. With these words we have been freed from the burden of forever trying to please God. For with these words, God the Father looks upon us just as He looked upon His only begotten Son at His baptism, saying, “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased” (Matt 3:17 NKJ).

In the name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Spirit. With these words God gives us the comfort and assurance that we are already among “those who have done good [and] will enter into eternal life,” as we confessed in the Athanasian Creed, for [by these words] we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them (Eph. 2:10 NKJ).

In the name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Spirit. With these words not only is the race begun, but it’s also finished. For with these words, heaven has come to earth. Where these words are spoken, we can say with Luther, “This is surely God’s house, here heaven has been opened to you.” Yes, here in this place, where God speaks the words recalling your baptism, where God speaks His words of forgiveness to you when you confess your sins, where God gives you the very body and blood of His Son Jesus Christ, here heaven has been opened to you. Here, in the Word of God given through the Apostle Paul – The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit [is] with you all.

With these words, you can be sure that the finish line of heaven is always before you because the God who waits for you at that finish line to give you the crown of life says, “I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” For with these words, God forgives you



[Pastor Steven Billings](#)

Sermon for the Feast of the Holy Trinity

June 4, 2023

all your sins in the name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen