

Our Redeemer Lutheran Church
Quincy, IL
Rev. Martin Eden

Holy Trinity
Saturday, May 29, 2021 at 5:00 p.m.
Sunday, May 30, 2021 at 9:00 a.m.

“Here Am I, Send Me”

Isaiah 6:1-8

As we do each year, we celebrate the Sunday of the Holy Trinity this first week after Pentecost. Last week, on Pentecost Sunday, I was in Minnesota to witness my nephew Karl confirming the faith of his Baptism. It was a wonderful service and it offered several interesting opportunities for interaction with some fellow brothers and sisters in Christ.

Besides my nephew, there was one other girl in his confirmation class who happened to be the granddaughter of Dr. Dean Wenthe, who was one of my favorite professors while I was at Seminary. I was able to spend some time before the service with him and he even shared an interesting anecdote about an encouraging letter which he sent to Pastor Otto when Dr. Wenthe was graduating from the Seminary back in 1971 when Pastor Otto was on the Board of Regents for the Seminary. Dr. Wenthe was well aware of exactly which congregation I was now privileged to serve.

After the service I was introduced to Rev. Dr. Thomas Aadland who had retired a little over a year ago from his position as Dean of the Theological Faculty at the Kenyan Lutheran Theological Seminary in Matongo, Kenya. My friend Rev. Peter Maganda who is Dean of the Seminary and pastor of Our Savior Lutheran Church in Uganda had done some of his training at the school in Matongo.

And I would be remiss if I failed to mention that sitting a couple of rows behind Dr. Aadland was “Baron von Raschke” who was a professional wrestling superstar in the 70’s and 80’s (his real name is James). He was truly big-time back in the day. He wrestled Andre the Giant, defeated Jesse “the body” Ventura, and is in several professional and amateur wrestling Halls of Fame. He was a highly decorated champion amateur wrestler nationally and internationally in the 1960’s. But everyone knows him for his signature move: “The Claw.”

On the drive home on Monday, as I was thinking about these interactions and the Day of Pentecost Confirmation Day Divine Service watching my nephew confess the faith of his Baptism and confess his faith in the words of the Apostle’s Creed and make his vows before God, but guess what part of the day dominated my thoughts? I got to meet Baron von Raschke!!

I got to visit with Dr. Wenthe whose Hebrew Readings class I was the only student to sign up for, so he invited me to meet with him in his office and we read Jonah together in Hebrew. He was just going to cancel the class, but I needed it to graduate. This is a man who played an important part of my spiritual formation as I prepared for the ministry as he was my instructor in a number of classes throughout the years.

I got to visit with the retired Dean of the Seminary in Kenya and share with him how Our Redeemer Lutheran Church here in Quincy is partnering with Our Savior Lutheran Church in Magamaga, Uganda and playing an instrumental role in furthering their important work of bringing a Muslim community to know Christ.

But all I wanted to think about was “The Claw.” Which made me think about what we are doing here today. It is the Sunday of the Holy Trinity. This is the one Sunday each year that we confess our faith in the words of the Athanasian Creed. It is much like Confirmation instruction here or in Africa or

wherever: You could spend every day for the next 100 years learning and teaching and never come to a full explanation of “Who is God?” However, God is not random or vague or completely unknowable. It is true that I cannot **explain** Him in a complete and certain sense. However, I can **confess** Him in completeness, certainty, and even simplicity.

We don't pretend to understand God. We confess Him. This is why we confess the creeds. Everything you need to know about what God has done for you, you confess in the words of the Nicene Creed. Everything you need to know about the incomprehensible nature of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit you confess in the Athanasian Creed. Everything you need to confess as an expression of the faith of your Baptism you confess in the Apostle's Creed. This is why we confess the creeds.

Our confession of faith, our confession of our sin, the hearing of the Absolution, the receiving of the body and blood of the Son of God is by far the biggest part of your day today. However, the vast majority of all who are listening to this sermon (especially those who grew up watching wrestling) I am sure you are far more likely to go home and search the Internet for Baron von Raschke than you will be to search for St. Athanasius and understand why this amazing statement of faith was named in his honor. I don't blame you. It is just human nature.

After the service, after speaking with Dr. Aadland for a while, I was introduced to James Raschke (The Baron). The subject came up that a documentary on his life had been recently released. I posted the trailer on my Facebook page a couple of days ago. But his wife emphasized several times that it is about much more than just wrestling. The Baron is a man who wrestled in Madison Square Garden and played the role of a brutal villain in the wrestling

ring, but it was evident that this man of God who is in church every Sunday had a real sense of place in the Kingdom of God as last Sunday was not the first time I saw him seated about halfway back on the pulpit side against the aisle there in the church in Rosemont MN.

Perhaps it is appropriate after all that you spend a little time this week thinking about a retired professional wrestler, but like his wife said, the story of who he is is not just about the wrestling. The men I met who hold doctorates in Theology, you expect them to make a good confession of faith. The confirmands that day are expected to make a good confession of faith. There were six ordained ministers in total in church that day. The grandson of Pastor Weiss who served at the Lutheran Church of St. John here in Quincy back in the 1920's and 30's was there last Sunday. I had a conversation with him also.

As I was thinking about Dr. Wenthe, Dr. Aadland, all of the pastors in attendance in church last Sunday, I was reminded that there were many other people worshiping and making the same confession of faith along with us. You don't have to have a graduate degree in Theology or be a member of a pastor's family to make a good confession. You may even look at yourself as a villain or as Isaiah looked at himself and said, "Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips." As the Lord spoke words of comfort to Isaiah, we see in the important things we have done and are doing today that the Lord has taken your guilt away and your sin is atoned for. In the mystery of the Trinity we see the only true living God – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. He has rescued us, atoned for our sin, and given us a place in His Kingdom. Regardless of our calling, our task is to answer Him when He calls and say, "Here am I, send me." Amen.