# *Listening for the Promise*

## WEEKLY DEVOTIONAL

**The Holy Trinity — June 15, 2025**

*56 Your father Abraham rejoiced that he would see my day. He saw it and was glad."*
*57 So the Jews said to him, "You are not yet fifty years old, and have you seen Abraham?" 58 Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am." 59 So they picked up stones to throw at him,*
*but Jesus hid himself and went out of the temple."*

*- John 8:56-59 -*

Scripture does not give us a fully developed doctrine of the Trinity. Instead, Scripture gives us a Trinitarian problem, the solution to which is the doctrine of the Trinity developed three centuries later. The essence of the Trinitarian problem is a seeming conflict between two opposing claims. On the one hand, Israel had confessed for centuries that God is one (Deuteronomy 6:4). On the other hand, certain passages in the New Testament suggest that Jesus Christ is also God. So, if God is one and if God is identified with the Father, how is Jesus also divine? On the other hand, if Jesus is indeed divine, then how is God one and not two? The doctrine of the Trinity arose to harmonize these competing claims while also integrating additional data regarding the deity of the Holy Spirit.

In our passage we see the type of claim that generated the Trinitarian problem. Jesus is arguing with certain Jews. When they questioned whether he was old enough to see or know Abraham, Jesus responded, "Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am." That this was a claim to divinity follows from the fact that Jesus used the divine name "I am" from Exodus 3:14. And it is clear that these Jews understood it as such because they then picked up stones to kill Jesus.

Digging a bit deeper, we may wonder what the name "I am" says about divinity that makes it such an excellent divine name for God in the first place. In this regard, a central aspect of divinity is to exist necessarily and to exist without limit or change. Our passage brings this out by contrasting "was" with "I am", "before Abraham was, I am." After all, to say, "Abraham was," implies that he is not now. However, Jesus can say, "I am," with regard to the past, present, or future since the fullness of his necessary existence never diminishes or changes.

Because God has created time, he is neither contained by time nor excluded from it. Rather, as an infinite and eternal being, God enters into all times with the fullness of his necessary existence. In other words, God's eternal "I am" stands behind time, creates time for us, and then enters time to be with us in the fullness of his being. For this reason, God says, "I am," yesterday, today, tomorrow, and forever.

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