

A Children's Sermon on Trinity's West Windows for Vacation Bible School

"How God Counts to Nine"

Neil Olsen, August 2017

[Bring all the children up to the nave and have them sit in the front pews. One teacher has a laser pointer. The second will sit and read to the children from this script while the other points to the windows.]

Ok children, how many of you can count to 10? How many know their a b c's?

Back in olden times, many people could not read or even count. How can you find Jesus if you can't read? Look up behind me. What do you see that is clear and colorful.

[wait for responses]

Colored windows. We call them stained glass windows. They were how people who could not read learned their bible, by looking at the windows. Most of the windows tell a story, or have an image. Trinity windows are very important. They tell us many stories. But they also help us count from one to nine.

Does anyone see a "one" window?

Yes the big blue and red and gold window at the top. Many churches have a big round window. They call it the rose window, because it is like a flower with pedals.

That is the number one. Does anyone see number two, that is, two windows alike? Look only at the windows for now, for there are many other two-things in this beautiful church.

Yes, the two right below it. The one on the left is an Alpha, and the other is an Omega. Those are Greek letters. The New Testament was written in Greek. Alpha is Greek for A, and Omega is Greek for Z.

Does anyone know what the expression "from A to Z" means?

The two windows tell us that the bible has all the knowledge from A to Z, from the beginning to the end. It means that God governs all things from the beginning of time to the end.

Do you know what the word Trinity means?

Yes, something that is three. It is so important we have many words for it, like trio, threesome, triple, triad, trinity, troika, triumvirate, trilogy, triptych, trefoil...I bet you haven't heard of half of those!

Does anyone see anything that is three?

Yes, in the middle of the rose window a strange set of three round red windows with letters are set around a center red window with letters, all connected with bands. It tries to explain the Trinity to us. Sometimes we call it the holy hubcap! Does it look like a hubcap to you? It does to me.

Not only Greek was important to our ancestors, but so was another language, Latin. The words on the three red circling windows are in Latin and mean Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The word on the very center window, Deus, means God. That is the Trinity, and we call it the Trinity Rose Window. Though I still think it looks like a Holy Hubcap. Our church was named after it –Trinity not the Hubcap. It means that the three windows are on the one rose window, that the three are one, and all three are really God, and revolve around God. Three are in one and one is three.

Now four. Does anyone see a four?

[wait for responses – they probably will see things we don't]

All very good. But look at the center. There are four winged creatures. They represent the four Greek Gospels. The second on the left holds emblems of Sts. Matthew and Luke - the winged man and ox. The second from the right holds symbols of Sts. Mark and John - the winged lion and the eagle. You see if you can't read, you still will know there are four gospels sent by God from heaven about to bring us the Good word. I wonder why an ox?

You might guess what is coming next. Does anyone see a five?

[wait for many responses]

Any other fives?

There are many fives there. There are those five very thin tall windows. There are many five sided stars – does anyone know how to draw five pointed star? Look again at the two windows, the Alpha and the Omega. Does anyone see five there – the five half circles around the edge. Those half rounds are called pedals in the world of stained glass windows, because they are like pedals. And you will see a lot of pedals around window, and carved on the pews, and in brass – some have three, some four, some five, and some even more pedals. Next time you go to any church, try to see if you notice a circle with pedals around it.

Any other fives?

Well how about six?

[wait for responses]

Yes, six pointed stars. That is called the Star of Creation or the Star of King David. It represents the six days that God took to make the world. You can draw it as two triangles – two threes again, or two

Trinity, one tringle upside down from the other. Six, after all, is two three. So one star is two threes which makes six.

Bet you can't guess what is next? Yes seven. Any sevens?

How many stars are there in that blue oval at the top of the five thin windows? There are seven arrayed like a cross. After six days creating the world, God put aside the seventh day for a day of rest, a Sabbath or Sunday. It is a very special day we reserve for learning about God.

Now this may be tricky. Does anyone see an eight? Remember the five half circles. Do you see any eight half circles. Look at those interesting round windows in the five narrow windows. We call them stained glass "medallions" and they have eight pedals. In addition to the four gospels we talked about before, they tell the whole story of Creation, Christ's Birth, his life, death, and resurrection, and the apostles going out into the world. I could tell you the whole story of the bible, from A to Z, or Alpha to Omega, just by looking at the fourteen medallions.

[spend as much time as you like talking about The Hand of God, The creation of the Heavens and the Earth, Adam speaking to the Animals [which animals do you see!], The Birth of Jesus, his Baptism by John with the Holy Spirit, his Death on the Cross, his Resurrection, the Tongues of Fire, and St. Paul's preaching.]

And now we come to our last number, the number nine. Does anyone see a nine up on the windows. Remember our five, and our eight? Do you see the nine pedals on the rose window? Remember that the Star of Creation with six sides was two triangles? Nine is a very mystical number. It is three threes, three Trinities. There are so many pedals that from a distance it looks like a single one window, but you can now see it is nine pedaled.

Now there are many other numbers, but before we leave the windows, look again at the how rose window, with the six and five stars, the Trinity of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and the very center of the Holy Hubcap, Deus, or God. The very center of something had a very special name. Look up at the arches on the ceiling, right where the chain from the chandelier or light this the roof. You will see a round lump at the place where all the arches come together. It holds all the arches, all the weight of the building, together. Without it the ceiling would fall in on us! Today it is called the arch stone, or the key stone – but in olden times it was call the boss! Where do you think we get the word Boss from? Yes, that stone holding everything together.

How hold everything together in your family? How is your boss – don't tell me, just think it. Isn't the teacher the boss of your classroom? Every set of arches, every family, every business, every school, every town, every society has a boss that hold everything together.

But windows too have a boss. The center of a rose window, the center of the great nine pedaled Trinity widow, the center of the Holy Hubcap, is called "the boss." Our boss has the word Deus, or God on it. So when you look at the windows, the alpha and omega, the history of the world from creation to the end of time, this story of Jesus and the lives of the apostles, all of it – remember that the God is the Boss.

[Option A if there is time.]

Now one more lesson. The bible tells us there are things visible and things invisible, things seen and things unseen. We have talked about the things seen. But there are three windows not seen. If you go over to the ladder and look sideways, you know what you will see? A fish window! Hidden. Now the fish was the symbol of the early church, of Christianity. But notice the expression on the fish; it doesn't seem very happy. Do you think that is because it is always hidden?

[Option B if more time is needed. You may wish to hand out pencils and papers.]

Let's have a hunt. I want you to look for animals in the church. Not angles, not yet, just Animals. Some are on the window behind me. But three are others on the big 10 windows in the center of the church. Go find them and tell me what you find and how many!

[Option C if more time is needed]

Now go and count the angels, and come back and tell me how many.