

SERMON for Trinity Sunday – June 12th, 2022.

Readings: Proverbs 8: 1-4, 22-31; Psalm 8; Romans 5: 1-5; John 16: 12-15.

This morning we celebrate the great feast of the Trinity. In some ways our readings - our usual three readings and a psalm - become secondary on this Sunday, because there is an expectation for the preacher to unravel the mystery of the Trinity, so that perhaps the most difficult doctrine of Christianity will become instantly and completely understandable to all!

Well, sorry!

One of the problems we have with the Trinity, in my humble opinion, is that as good heirs of the Enlightenment, we want to be able to explain it in logical, rational terms. But the Trinity is a mystery, and like any mystery, we go down rabbit trails, there are sleights on hand, there are diversions and distractions (these are all known as "theology"!).

We try to talk about this Mystery, but because we are humans trying to talk about the Divine, we can only come up with metaphors which may 'show' us something about God, but do not provide clear language.

What I would rather talk to you about is our experience of God –

God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

God, the Source of all Being, Eternal Word and Life-giving Spirit.

God, our Creator, Redeemer and Sanctifier.

This complicated Triune God, Three in One God who we believe in, experience and worship ... as Love.

One of my e-friends, who has a way with words, described it this way, he says:

I see the doctrine of the Trinity attempting, often unsuccessfully, to draw us closer to the truth that God is Love. Not a hypothesis, not a research project, not a theological conundrum, but Love.

To use traditional, metaphorical language:

I experience God the Father as love in the cool breezes which stir my soul in the morning when I walk, in the touch of my loved ones in times when words can't help, in the unconditional acceptance of my dog.

I experience God the Son as love in those who have lived out his call to justice in some of the most difficult places in the world, who have decided to follow his teachings on peace and reconciliation, who have been willing to set aside their lives for others, who have themselves been broken so others might be made whole.

I experience God the Spirit as love in the children who will break their piggybanks and set up lemonade stands to send money to the children who are caught up in local disasters, like the floods or bushfires; in the therapy dogs that go to places where people are so traumatised by life, they desperately need to have something to hug; in the youth who don't see the things which divide, rather that people who are different are just the same as they are, despite our best efforts to convince them otherwise; in seniors who live out the truth that if we pay attention as we grow older, Wisdom really will become our best friend.

He concludes:

I may not be able to explain the Trinity, but I know the Trinity, and they love me. ¹

I believe that God *is* love and what holds God together is a loving relationship within the Godhead which results in the yearning for relationship which emanates from God, reaching out to us, to draw us in.

Our readings this morning are rich in this calling into relationship. Our Old Testament reading from Proverbs talks of Lady Wisdom - Sophia! It could also speak of the Holy Spirit - that Spirit of Truth which Jesus speaks of in the Gospel. It is very Trinitarian - the Spirit which will speak of Jesus and the truth sent from the Father through Jesus ... to all for us - calling us into that relationship with God.

Then we have a short piece from Paul's letter to the church in Rome. He says:

....we also boast in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us.
[Romans 5: 3-5.]

Suffering produces endurance, endurance produces character and character produces hope. And hope doesn't disappoint us because by the Holy Spirit God's love is poured into our hearts.

Saint Paul's life was far from easy. He was hunted and persecuted by the Jews as a traitor and turn-coat after his conversion to Christianity when he was meant to be hunting them out. Their anger grew greater as his popularity grew and as he drew more and more converts to Christianity. The second part of the Acts of the Apostles tells of how he is brought to trial in Jerusalem and then has to be spirited out of the city when a plot is uncovered to kidnap and murder him. Eventually he meets martyrdom in Rome. Paul knew all about suffering.³

It was through the strength and power of the Holy Spirit that Paul was able to endure his sufferings as he spread the good news about Jesus, he was firm in his faith and trust in God. Being invited into relationship with the holy three helps us too in our life, whether it is full of blessings or with challenges and suffering.

The work of the Holy Spirit is not for us alone but to be shared with others, so it is the same with 'Hope'. We are called to reach out to the abused, the hungry, the homeless and those who have lost all sense of Hope. Those with broken dreams and broken lives - needing hope, needing strength to make it through the next day, needing love and understanding - needing relationship.

How do we make sense of all that?

I believe by each morning pledging ourselves to a relationship with God; let us be drawn into oneness with the Holy Three, so that we can be channels of God's hope, peace and love in this world.

I'd like to finish with the alternate Collect which Alison shared on the front of the Pew Sheet. Let us pray:

Holy Trinity,
You are neither monarch nor monologue
but an eternal harmony of gift and response:
through the Uncreated Word and the Spirit of Truth
include us and all creation in your extravagant love;
through the wisdom of God, who raises her voice to call us to life. Amen.²

Revd Sally Buckley
12 June 2022.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:

1. Thom Shuman in discussing the Trinity on *midrash* and posted 23.05.2013.
2. Stephen Shakespeare, *Prayers for an Inclusive Church*, © 2008.