

SERMON for Trinity Sunday - May 30, 2021.

Readings: Isaiah 6: 1-8; Psalm 29; Romans 8: 12-17; John 3: 1-17.

Trinity Sunday is not my favour Sunday to preach, not because I don't like the readings, but because there is always a slight pull on me to attempt to explain the wonderful mystery which is the Trinity, and unless you all want to have a nap and stay here for the rest of the day ... you will be relieved to know that I am not going to!

The readings set down for today are wonderful, meaningful readings and I feel speak in different ways about the different *persona* of the Trinity.

I have always loved the Isaiah reading, I love hearing about the way God calls us into relationship, into service. As different and individual as each one of us is, so is our experience of God, and God's call on our life. Here we have Isaiah's encounter with the living God when he is on duty in the Temple.

I am one of the worst procrastinators around, and when I was studying, I was not surprised to discover that it brought the worst of that trait out! When it came to writing assignments, I dithered around, always feeling I had to read just one more article, one more book, from which I might just get that other piece of knowledge or information which I needed to start writing! I made lists of where all these references were, for all the different aspects of the question I was about to tackle, and I never felt I was properly prepared to take that plunge and start writing!

I wonder sometimes whether this isn't a bit like our call to serve God, do we ever feel ready? I know that I would do better if I prayed more regularly, especially before a significant event, and certainly more than "Help me, Lord!"

For Isaiah in the Temple, before the great and holy One, he is overcome with his unworthiness and sin, and has the vision of his mouth being touched with a burning coal to purify him. Then when he hears God ask: "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" he is able to reply "Here I am, send me!"

Now purified of his sin and guilt, he is prepared to go out and spread what we find out later, is a message which is going to be horribly unpopular, calling people to repentance and to turn back to God before it is too late (never a popular vocation!).

Do you notice "Whom shall **I** send, and who will go for **us**?"

Hints here of God in community, often used as one of the Old Testament texts which point to the doctrine of the Trinity.

The Psalm also points to the first *persona* in the Godhead, the creator God, all powerful, to whom is ascribed glory and strength. The power of God like a mighty thunderstorm.

The Epistle from Romans talks of work of the Spirit within us and through us. Paul writes that all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God, and the Spirit bears witness to that. It is the power of the work of the Spirit which leads us and bears witness, filling us with truth and knowledge.

Elsewhere Paul writes:

Therefore, since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have obtained access to this grace in which we stand; and we boast in our hope of sharing the glory of God. And not only that, but 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: 1-5]

Those of us who are part of Christ's church have had, I hope, our values affected by the marvellous knowledge of God's grace. But as human beings our values are also formed by what we experience during our lives. If our lives are filled with joy, our values are greatly formed by joy. Similarly, if our lives are filled with suffering, our values, both good and bad, are formed by suffering. But, at the end of the day, it is the work of the Spirit of God working in and through us which makes the difference and helps us to understand the meaning of our lives.

Finally in the Gospel's focus, as is expected, is on Jesus. The visit of the Pharisee Nicodemus seems one of those incidents when the two principle characters are talking at cross-purposes.

Do you follow what happened?

Nicodemus approached Jesus on one level. He spoke of something very literal and specific. But, as often is the case, Jesus responded by reframing the question. He renamed what Nicodemus was saying and in the process, reclaimed the central truth of the Gospel.

Nicodemus is using literal language. Jesus is using symbolic, metaphorical language.

Nicodemus speaks of the physical. Jesus speaks of the spiritual.

Nicodemus is stuck in his own frame of reference. Jesus changes up the game and offers deeper meaning for Nicodemus.

In the face of all this, we see something different. What we thought was accurate, is not. Jesus shows us a clearer way to live out our own calling and mission.

Be reborn in the spirit. - Live in that spirit. - Live life not just on the surface, but in depth, then our mission, our service for God will become clearer.

Jesus also points to his own mission and calling of being "lifted up" so that all who see him can believe and through faith have eternal life through God's love and action through the Son.

While in our readings we have a word picture of the activities of the Trinity, I think my favourite icon of the Trinity, is Rublev's icon, (*a few copies of which I have scattered around the pews!*).

I was reminded of it when a friend spoke of the activity within the Godhead, which is a constant, loving relationship, with the idea that each points to the other:

The Spirit 'testifies' about Jesus; the Spirit 'glorifies' Jesus; the Spirit points, not to itself, but to Jesus.

Jesus is never about himself. All that Jesus does is to witness about God the Father; Jesus' power and authority comes from his Father; Jesus 'glorifies' the Father; Jesus points, not to himself, but always points us towards God.

And God? Well, God points us away from God towards Jesus; God proclaims Jesus as the divine Beloved; God encourages/challenges/dares us to listen.

Rather than God being the sort of capricious, authoritarian, angry God who is always demanding, always judging, always threatening as many of us were taught when we were younger (and some folks are still being taught that sort of God), God is revealed as humble, almost shy, each Person never focused on self, but on the Other; each glorifying the Other, not itself. The relationship within the Trinity is giving, sharing, loving, living for the Other.

And this is the relationship which the Trinity invites us into, chooses to have with us, and wants us to have, with God and with one another. Amen.