

Trinity Sunday 2022

Today is Trinity Sunday, the only day on the church calendar that is devoted to doctrine. As I reflected on how I might approach the topic, I recalled an incident that is relevant. During check-in at a group meeting, a young mother told us how her curious four-year-old son asked a perfectly reasonable question the previous Sunday: who is God? Pressed for an immediate answer, she called God “the big dude in the sky.” Her four-year-old was satisfied but she was mortified.

That exchange helped me understand the challenge that the Doctrine of the Holy Trinity tackles. It is an attempt to open the mystery that is the divine and to understand how God works in the world, limited as we may be by language. It says that, although we name three figures – Father, Son and Holy Spirit (or Creator, Redeemer and Life-Giving Spirit) -- there is only one God.

References to the Trinity are ubiquitous in our worship services. We invoke the Trinity as we begin our worship, after the Psalm, in the Creed, before a sermon, to name a few.

Sometimes, I’m not so sure whether repetition enhances our understanding of something or makes us insensitive to the words we’re saying.

What I’d like to do this morning is to look at today’s scripture to see some of the ways the divine has been revealed throughout the ages. Not surprisingly, the stories reveal a creative, loving power, a redemptive power, and a spirit of truth.

In the Book of Proverbs, we meet the divine feminine, Wisdom, who is personified as a street preacher. Wisdom tells her story as being created by God at the beginning of God’s work, the first of God’s acts of long ago..., rejoicing in God’s inhabited world and delighting in the human race."
[Proverbs 8:22- 26]

However, Wisdom is not just a result of God’s work, she also participates in God’s creation.

“Then I was beside [God], like a master worker; and I was daily [God’s] delight, rejoicing before [God], always, rejoicing in [God’s] inhabited world and delighting in the human race. [Proverbs 8:30-31]

Joy and enthusiasm just leap off the pages.

The Psalmist asks God a provocative question: what’s so great about humans? Or, stated more eloquently “what are human beings that you are mindful of them, mortals that you care for them?” [Ps 8:4.] Then, perhaps

with a bit of incredulity, the Psalmist goes on to observe that God seems to have made humanity God's coworkers:

Yet you have made them a little lower than God,
and crowned them with glory and honour.
You have given them dominion over the works of your hands;
you have put all things under their feet ... Ps 8:5-6

In Paul's letter to the Romans, he covers a lot of ground in a relatively few words. "We have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ," he says, pointing out that Jesus provides access to this relationship with God. Although we may experience suffering in this life, we have hope of sharing the glory of God. We can even boast about our suffering because "suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not disappoint us." [5.2]. And, we are not alone because we have the Holy Spirit.

In the Gospel, Jesus is approaching the end of his time with his disciples, and he knows that the disciples won't be able to bear what he has to say. So, he reassures them by telling them that the Holy Spirit – the Spirit of Truth – will come and will guide them to all the truth.

"He will glorify me, because he will take what is mine and declare it to you. All that the Father has is mine. For this reason I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you."

In my view, the Trinity is not so much about who God is but is more of a description of what God does and what God wants. Yes, God is God, God is Jesus, God is Spirit — that's the who. But what comes through to me in today's readings is that it's all about loving relationship. Our God is a relational God. It's at the core of who God is but also, it's at the core of what God does, what God needs the church to be, what God wants for us.

Scripture, reason, analysis can take me only so far in understanding the doctrine of the Trinity. Maybe understanding the Trinity is less an exercise of logic and reason and more a matter of heart and soul. To close, I'll turn to a poet who wrote this:

Father, Son, and Holy Spirit mean that the mystery beyond us, the mystery among us, and the mystery within us are all the same mystery. Thus, the Trinity is a way of saying something about us and the way we experience God.

The Trinity is also a way of saying something about God and the way he is within himself, i.e., God does not need the Creation in order to have something to love because within himself love happens. In other

words, the love God is is love, not as a noun but as a verb. This verb is reflexive as well as transitive.

If the idea of God as both Three and One seems far-fetched and obfuscating, look in the mirror someday.

There is (a) the interior life known only to yourself and those you choose to communicate it to (the Father).

There is (b) the visible face which in some measure reflects that inner life (the Son).

And there is (c) the invisible power you have in order to communicate that interior life in such a way that others do not merely know about it, but know it in the sense of its becoming part of who they are (the Holy Spirit).

Yet what you are looking at in the mirror is clearly and indivisibly the one and only You. (Frederick Buechner)