

Trinity Sunday – June 7th 2020

Welcome and Call to Worship

I welcome each one of you this morning. Some of us may have come this morning to get closer to God. Some of us may have come this morning without much sense of God or belief at all. But likely, all of us have come wanting to know we matter and wanting to know that our journey through life is significant, that we make a difference. Indeed, many of us may have come wanting to make a difference in this world, for one of the unique things about a church community is that it does provide avenues for us to offer help and to make a difference, which may be hard to do just on your own. So, we gather as community, a community of faithfulness, a community dreaming of a better world, a community of reflection, of connection, and of mission. Come let us worship as we Light the Christ candle!

Lighting the Christ Candle

Our Christian tradition teaches us that there is mystery and wonder in our relationship with God; a mystery and wonder that is expressed as we relate to God as Trinity: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer.

Mystery, yes, yet at the same time revelation; one God whose fullness is lived in relationship. So, we light this Christ candle naming Jesus as a life-giving, gracious presence within our relationship with the Creator and the Spirit. Let Us Pray

Opening Prayer

God, our Creator, the one and only, who started this world and gave life to humanity;

Christ, our Saviour, who came to earth to live and die for us and teach us your lessons of love;

Holy Spirit, the breath of life, who takes away our sorrows and gives new beginnings; Creator, Saviour, Holy Spirit,
you each are a part of us and part of each other,
helping us grow, and helping us live with grace and love.

For this, we give you thanks, this day. In your Holy name we pray Amen.

Song – This Is My Father's World

Scripture 2 Corinthians 13:11-13 (NIV)

¹¹ Finally, brothers and sisters, rejoice! Strive for full restoration, encourage one another, be of one mind, live in peace. And the God of love and peace will be with you.

¹² Greet one another with a holy kiss. ¹³All God's people here send their greetings.

¹⁴ May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

Meditation – God Is Social

In one of my university classes on the Hebrew scriptures, one of my fellow students who was raised in the Jewish tradition asked me during a debate,

“Why do Christians believe in three gods?” His tone was solemn and earnest.

“We don’t. Actually, we believe in the same God you do. Just... differently.” This was a lame answer, I knew, but I desperately hoped that it would suffice.

It didn’t. “No,” he pressed on. “I mean the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost thing.” He looked at me with a truly puzzled expression. “I just don’t get it.”

“Well Neither do I,” was what I wanted to say. But he looked so genuinely bewildered that I sighed and fumbled my way through all the inadequate explanations I’d heard as a kid: “God is sort of like water! Water exists in three states, right? Liquid, solid, and gas? God’s like that! Or, like an egg! The shell, the eggwhite, and the yolk? Three parts, one egg! Or, um, a three-leaf clover! Or maybe like a tree! The roots, the trunk, and the branches — but they make up one tree, right? Or... or a triangle!”

The look of confusion on his face only deepened. For a minute his politeness warred with his curiosity, but then he blurted out the inevitable: “What’s the point of believing in three gods? “Why three? What difference does it make?”

Today, we celebrate Trinity Sunday, and try, for better or for worse, to contemplate the very question my fellow student asked me: “What difference does three make?” It’s a tough question, particularly if we take the Holy Trinity for granted or we find our belief of the Three in One irrelevant to daily life.

While most of the festivals on our liturgical calendar celebrate dramatic and suspenseful events— Jesus’s birth, the Resurrection, last week’s coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost — well Trinity Sunday lacks glitter. It’s abstract and boring. Just water, eggs, trees, and triangles. Who cares?

In *The Divine Dance*, a beautiful and transformative book on the doctrine of the Holy Trinity, Franciscan priest and theologian

Richard Rohr argues that caring and our experience of the Trinity comes from starting in the right place: “Don’t start with the One and try to make it into Three,” he writes, “but start with the Three and see that this is the deepest nature of the One.”

So this morning I would like to lift up what I think is the deepest nature of the One and that is: God is social, and so are we. In the early 16th century, priest and theologian Martin Luther once said, “God is nothing but burning love and a glowing oven full of love.”

And if God is love, then God cannot exist in isolation. Think about it. To love is to be in relationship, and to love perfectly is to be in an eternal relationship. If God is perfect love, then God must be social.

God is not some simple, solitary, isolated, individual being. God is not some kind of Wizard of Oz hiding out behind the curtain of the stars. God is not personal in that sense. Rather, God is personal in the sense that God is the love that creates, redeems and sustains everything that exists.

The Rev Joseph Pagano puts it like this “The life of God is like a divine dance of persons in love from which sparks fly, the love that moves the sun and the other stars. At the heart of the universe is the divine dance of persons in love, and if God is the

love that creates and reconciles and transforms all that exists, then God must be relational in God's essence. So when we say that God is Trinity, it is a way of saying that God is love, nothing but burning love and a glowing oven full of love, a love that overflows into all of creation."

Now, if God is social, then we are social too. If there is one thing that has been apparent during this entire time of imposed self isolation is that each one of us longs for human and spiritual contact.

And If we are created in the image and likeness of the Triune God, then we are also created to be in loving relationships.

If we humans preferred to be alone and came together only rarely to procreate and then separate as some animals do, then this theory would fall short at this point. But we humans love to get together. This is a lesson learned so well during the shelter-in-place orders that have come with the pandemic. We are, in fact, the beings in communion we were created to be. Being separated by the coronavirus has not broken that sense of communion. Across the Church, people are finding ways to stay connected. Imperfect as this may be, our new ways of joining together come from a deep longing which is in the very heart of Holy Trinity. We are hard-wired for relationships of mutual fellowship and love.

Did you know that many scientists are also saying that we are hard-wired for social connections? In an article on trust in the Harvard Business Review in 2009, Roderick Kramer wrote:

“Within one hour of birth, a human infant will draw her head back to look into the eyes and face of the person gazing at her. Within a few more hours, the infant will orient her head in the direction of her mother’s voice. And, unbelievable as it may seem, it’s only a matter of hours before the infant can actually mimic a caretaker’s expressions. A baby’s mother, in turn, responds and mimics her child’s expressions and emotions within seconds. In short, we’re social beings from the get-go: We’re born to be engaged and to engage others.”

Now this is really amazing, but it really is not all that surprising, since God is love. That love has created us and redeemed us and sustains us. Our life, our breath, our very existence is a gift. When we enter into loving relationships, we not only find our truest and deepest selves, but we also find God, because we are created in the image of the Triune God.

God is social, and so are we. We are created to participate in God’s love, and we are created to share that love with others. Here’s how Miroslav Volf puts it in his book “Free of Charge”:

"If God is love, then the purpose of human life is to participate in that love, and to share that love with others. That is why, when Jesus was asked about the greatest commandment, he said "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength, and you shall love your neighbor as yourself."

This may be the key to the universe or at the very least the solution to this troubled world.

God is love. Participate in that love. Share that love.

So God is social, and so are we. God is nothing but burning love and a glowing oven full of love, and we are created to participate in that love and to share that love. I'm hoping that these insights that come from thinking about the Trinity could really transform how we think about God and ourselves and our place in the world.

As a minister I still hear the statement "I just can't believe in a God who sits up there in heaven and allows all these terrible things to happen in the world." And my usual response is to say, "Well, neither do I." My view of God as some kind of aloof Wizard of Oz hanging out alone behind the curtain of the stars is not worth defending. More importantly, it is not the God I know who poured himself out completely for us on the cross of Jesus Christ.

The Trinity is a way of saying, that costly love, that vulnerable love, that suffering love that we know in Christ, that love that continues in the new life given to us in the Spirit, is who God most truly, most fully is.

God is *Emmanuel*, “God with us” and for us, who suffers with us and for us, not hanging out in some far corner of the universe watching all the pain and sorrow of the world, but rather hanging on the cross for us and for our salvation.

The Trinity at its heart, is the love that moves the sun and the other stars and the same love that poured itself out for us in the self-giving love of Jesus. And if we are created in the image and likeness of God, then we find our true selves, not in being aloof and alone and apart and above it all, but rather in giving of ourselves away in love, and in all those ways we are with and for one another.

God is social, and so are we.

God is nothing but burning love and a glowing oven full of love. And We are created to participate in and share that love. Thanks be to God. Amen.

Pastoral Prayer

God, our Creator, the one and only, who started this world and gave life to humanity;

Christ, our Saviour, who came to earth to live and die for us and teach us your lessons of love;

Holy Spirit, the breath of life, who takes away our sorrows and gives new beginnings;

Creator, Saviour, Holy Spirit, each is a part of us helping us grow, and helping us live with grace and love. For this, we give you thanks, this day.

We pray now for our leaders, may they love the truth, seek the truth, stand unflinching for the truth, and act on the truth. Let nothing, O Lord, be swept under the rug. Forbid that any power or privilege would be allowed to twist or distort or conceal the truth, so that we may move from the darkness of wrong into the light of right. For the haters and the bitter and the hostile — of every race — we pray that they will see “the light of the gospel” We pray that the light will banish darkness from their souls — the darkness of arrogance and racism and selfishness. We pray for broken hearts, because “a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise”

We pray that our world will see miracles of reconciliation and lasting harmony, rooted in truth and in the paths of righteousness.

We pray for peace — the fullest enjoyment of *shalom*, flowing down from the God of peace, and bought at an infinite price for us the followers of the Prince of Peace.

And as the scourge of COVID-19 continues to kill, and as the virus wreaks havoc on people’s lives, and the riots south of the border sends peoples hopes and dreams up in smoke, and the fabric of life together is torn, we pray that the compounding of sorrows will not compound our sins, but send us desperate towards you our only hope, Jesus Christ the risen Saviour.

O Jesus, for this you died! That you might reconcile hopeless, hostile people to God and to each other. You have done it for millions by grace through faith. Do it, Lord Jesus, in this we pray in the words that you taught us to say “Our Father who art in Heaven”. Amen.

Please enjoy our closing entitled “God Is Love” performed by Ali Auburn and may the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

Until we meet again.