

Matthew 8:16-20 Psalm 8 - Trinity Sunday

If you have been following the Lectionary, our Church's calendar, for the past 6 months we have been remembering and celebrating the Incarnation and the redeeming works and life of Christ our Saviour.

We started with His birth, actually with preparing for His Incarnation and Birth, and our need for him, calling "O Come, O Come Emmanuel." These last two weeks saw the culmination of those six months, with His glorious Ascension, seating at the Right Hand of the Father, and the sending of the Holy Spirit.

And the end of all this, the point of it all, is that we should behold and come to know and love the living God, The Incarnation, a fancy word for the Son's taking our nature upon himself, is the revelation of the life of God: His being, His love, His majesty, and His glory. The lectionary lets us see His glory lived out in His life, like John says in the beginning of His Gospel.

"And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth". Says John 1:14

Today then, our celebration of Christ's redeeming work is culminated on Trinity Sunday with the celebration of what is the whole point of it - the divine life of God himself, in which we are called to share: adopted children, by grace, "heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ."

So today we try to use words to sum up great heavenly truths about God. And that's not easy. Our words do not describe very well the glories of heaven. Even the Apostle John falls

short in revelation, as he can only use words. We use the language of images and similes, and stretch imagination to the breaking point.

Today is Trinity Sunday, On Trinity Sunday, many ministers will focus on this doctrine of our Christian faith, one of the most inexpressible mysteries of our faith, and will try to do so in about twenty minutes, using words which will always fail.

There have been many attempts to try to bring this mystery into our level of understanding. Some have said that the Trinity is like water in its three phases: steam, liquid, and ice. It's a good start but ask me sometime why this is an error!

Others have said that the Trinity is like the same person with three different titles, such as a woman could be a mother, sister, and daughter all at the same time. Others have compared the Trinity to a cherry pie which is cut into three distinct pieces yet the filling in the middle all runs together as one.

I've used all of these in my teaching career when trying to explain (and failing miserably) because with all things considered, none of these analogies or metaphors or symbols or whatever it is you want to call them is an accurate illustration.

The Trinity is three distinct Persons in One God. All three - Father, Son, Holy Spirit - have been around for all eternity; all three co-exist so that all can be apparent at the same place at the same time, as we saw in Epiphany season with Jesus' baptism. God the Father speaking, God the Son being baptized in the Jordan, and the Holy Spirit descending upon Him. Each of the Three are able to talk to each other as

distinct Persons (like when God the Son prayed to God the Father)...

Also, the presence of One can be emphasized over the other, which we can see in our reading. A symbol of this Trinity in Unity at work. Christ speaks to His disciples, telling them that he is going away, going to the Father, from where he will send the Spirit, the Helper, to be with them.

The doctrine of the Trinity is the central doctrine of the Christian faith. Our "faith is this," says the Athanasian Creed, "that we worship one God in Trinity, and the Trinity in unity."

If you know anything of the early History of the Church, perhaps you know with what difficulty the doctrine of the Trinity was clarified. St. Athanasius was exiled five times from his diocese of Alexandria in his struggles against the Arians, who denied that the Son was Fully God. That is why we say, in the Nicene Creed,

"being of one substance with the Father,"

"very God of very God."

These are phrases which slip, can slip easily off our tongues, but they are phrases which were shouted by multitudes in processions through the streets of ancient Rome and Constantinople, to teach all that Christ was as fully God as God the Father.

The Arian solution - that Jesus is God-like, God LIKE, but not very God, would have meant a very different Christianity. If He is not really God, He is not our Saviour.

If Christ is not God, His death would not be sufficient to pay for our sins. The Trinity tells us of our relation to the Father as children. Where Hindu's see deity as a disembodied cosmic force behind everything, and Muslims see God as a stern master, we know God as Father, and Christ as brother, from which we can understand all Fatherhood and Brotherhood.

We are sealed with the Holy Spirit, WHO marks us as His, and who enables us to live as God would have us to live.

"We worship one God in Trinity, and the Trinity in unity," says the Creed of St. Athanasius. "Three Persons and One God." But what does that mean, beyond sheer mystification?

St. Augustine asks us to consider the life of the human soul, God's image. The soul remembers, it knows, it loves. These are three activities, and yet they are the activity of one soul. In us, these personal activities are an imperfect unity - our reason and our love do not simply coincide. God is the perfect unity of personal activity:

He is, He knows, He loves; and with Him, these three are one.

Father, Word and Spirit, three persons and one God: all equally divine, all absolutely God, one nature, one reality. God is not three beings, three "schizophrenic personalities:" God is one.

You get the idea. A complex God who cannot be easily described. Each of the Three Persons of our One God has different attributes yet the Three work together as One.

The last couple of weeks in the lectionary readings we have been focusing on unity. We saw unity through the

commandment of Christ that we love one another (John 17:20-26). Then we saw the unity we have in that we are many being made into one church.

But those are examples of a human unity, and many times an imperfect unity. The Trinity, however, is a divine unity, the one and only perfect unity, of how three distinct Persons are together as One.

Romans 5 provides one example of how the Three Persons of our One God work together. In this instance, Paul writes about how God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit gives us hope.

Paul tells us there how we are justified with God the Father by faith. Justified means "made in alignment with." Like your margins on a computer. When we are justified with God, we are brought into alignment, made right, with God by faith.

How? We are justified by faith through God the Son,

God the Son acts as intercessor for us with God the Father. It is through Christ's grace that we are able to stand before God the Father as justified. It is through the Holy Spirit, that this grace is applied into our lives. Yet these three, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, are One.

The Trinity is one of the hardest things to explain and understand in Christian Doctrine, despite the fact that we recite the creed every week. But the one thing we certainly can say, and do, is to Praise God, even when we do not understand Him.

We Praise God that he is a loving Father, and the One, True, Holy and Living God. All other gods are mere idols

We Praise Him because he is our creator, King, Shepherd, and the preserver of all things. We praise Him that His Love, Power, Wisdom, and justice is displayed throughout His Creation. All these things are worthy of Praise

As for God the Son, we can praise him for His obedience to live as a servant and to suffer and die upon the cross to become our saviour. Praise Him for conquering the grave by rising from the dead. Praise Him that he made eternal life with God the Father possible.

And as for God the Holy Spirit, we can praise Him because His presence with us never ends. He is the one who reveals the word of God to us so that we not only become Christians, but also grow and become faithful witnesses.

This is why David could write such a powerful message in Psalm 8. As David gazed out into the vast universe, with its celestial bodies, he couldn't help but have a sense of awe and wonder for who God is.

That Hymn of Praise is to God as the Good Creator, Ruler, and sustainer of everything in the Heavens, on Earth, and in the Sea.

It is a song of Thanksgiving that, no matter how small we are in comparison to all that God has created, the Father is always mindful of us and caring for us.

David couldn't help but lift up this song of praise after pondering the fact that instead of giving us the judgment our sins deserve, he gives us love and care.

That despite the fall of humanity, he still blesses us by appointing us as the governors over all of His creation to maintain its order and to shine God's Light upon it.

This is why we join the Psalmist in crying out, "O Lord, our Lord, How Majestic is Your name in all the Earth. That is why we Praise God, the Trinity, the Three in one.

I'd like to close with reminding you of the words from our Baptism service .

Profession of Faith ↑

The president says

Let us affirm,
together with these who are being baptized,
our common faith in Jesus Christ.

Do you believe and trust in God the Father,
source of all being and life,
the one for whom we exist?

All I believe and trust in him.

Do you believe and trust in God the Son,
who took our human nature,
died for us and rose again?

All I believe and trust in him.

Do you believe and trust in God the Holy Spirit,
who gives life to the people of God

and makes Christ known in the world?

All I believe and trust in him.

This is the faith of the Church.

All This is our faith.

**We believe and trust in one God,
Father, Son and Holy Spirit.**

Therefore, let's humbly accept this Biblical Truth and Join with all Christians in praising our God, the Trinity, Three in One,

And now unto God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit, three Persons, one God, be ascribed as is most justly due, all might, majesty, dominion, and power, both now and forever, world without end. Amen.