

Sunday Thought

12th June 2022 Trinity Sunday

Readings

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

Family in One

Trinity is not the most popular Sunday for many preachers. God as three persons – Father, Son and Holy Spirit, yet one person - is a difficult concept to explain! But that's the problem – explaining – trying to stuff God into a sack of words. They won't all fit into our personal sack! Just as soon as we think we have accomplished it they start popping out again to make room for more. The Christian doctrine of the Trinity in words has always been a stumbling block to faith and certainly to sharing the Gospel with people of other Faiths. That's especially true for the Abrahamic religions. Muslims and Christians for example. Both believe there is only one God, but then we confuse the friendship by claiming God is three persons. I recall in early days of ministry, struggling to explain it to a mostly Muslim literacy class in a West African prison, with little visible success. And then there was also the question of the world being round instead of flat! I have heard and used various analogies to explain the Trinity. Like water being the same as ice and steam, or the family photograph album in which granny still looks like herself when she was an infant.



Trinity Sunday concludes the annual celebration of the gospel from Advent to Pentecost and is a day to rejoice that we have experienced all of God! In my experience, the *Trinity* is not a matter of words, but of relationship. From my earliest days I learned that God is everywhere and part of my life. He is to be worshipped especially on Sundays and his way of life followed every day! Then I was introduced to Jesus, and in him God became real and personally meaningful. A few years later I was put in touch with God as Holy Spirit and my faith became more real, alive, and assured. By the way I discovered then that the Holy Spirit is God's third 'person'. I still find it quite disrespectful and misleading to hear some preachers referring to the Spirit as 'IT'. To put my experience simply, Jesus as Son of God gives us all we can understand of God in human terms – his truth, love, mercy, forgiveness, praise, joy Then the Holy Spirit completes 'the one person' giving us all of God in every part of our lives. It's the new starting point for a fantastic, eternal journey of faith. If I have further complicated 'Trinity Sunday the illustration above may help to explain.

I have found today's Bible readings helpful for understanding our trinitarian doctrine of God. In the gospel Jesus explains to his first followers that he is soon to leave them but there is still much more for them to learn and see. These were things they could not be clear about at that time - from that side of his Cross and Resurrection and the happenings at Pentecost. Then Jesus gave them a promise. When he had left them to go to the Father, he would return in the Holy Spirit, living, speaking, and acting in their hearts and minds. They would have access to the whole picture - an ever-increasing knowledge of *all of God*.

Paul, in his words to Christians at Rome adds testimony to that. He says how through our faith, God is real and active in our lives now. Despite all the troubles we may have to endure and learn from, he has given us a sure hope of even more glorious things yet to come. Beyond the words, *God has poured all his love into our hearts with his gift of the Holy Spirit!*

The passage from Proverbs about wisdom, I find particularly helpful. In the scriptures, wisdom is often equated with the Holy Spirit and given a feminine image! That's great - like the mother's share within the Trinity. It may not be everyone's experience, but I understand the words from proverbs, *'she makes herself heard. Reason calls out!!!'* When all the family differences and questions have been aired, she comes, like a mother, with quiet, gentle, even stern words of love, making everything clear. Jesus' description of the Spirit's gifts suggest he has 'mother' in mind - *helper, teacher, supporter, guide accompanist*

While I find similar thoughts in the words of modern theologians and hymnwriters, I know other students of the scriptures and sociologists too, will be unhappy with my words. They may well be struggling to push words in and out of the *Trinity doctrine sack* - but the God Family thoughts of father, mother and older brother help me. Even better to know that through Jesus I am welcome to be part of his family! You too!

Life in Perspective (a prayer with Psalm 8 in mind)

Lord! Creator God!
All the world reflects your greatness and your glory.
It calls for songs of praise, from everyone, including the youngest children, joining an eternal chorus together with heaven's choirs.

Praising your creation helps us keep our lives in perspective.
We are so carefully and wonderfully made in every detail.
We feel so insignificant in the great scheme of things, yet you think of us, care for us, giving us knowledge, skills and powers to share with you in managing your earthly works.

Father God, we wonder at your glory.
Give us a constant view of your greatness and of our weakness
to make us wise as we share in your cosmic workshop and its constant songs of praise.

