

Sunday Thought

30th May 2021 Trinity Sunday

Readings

Isaiah 6: 1 - 8

Psalm 29

Romans 8: 12 - 17

John 3: 1 - 17

Three in One in Three

Trinity Sunday! Not the most popular day for many preachers who may be asked to explain the doctrine of The Trinity! It was a dominant theme for me in early ministry, working in a majority Muslim country. Often, in the prison literacy class,



the question would be put – 'Why do Christians worship three gods – Father, Son and Holy Spirit? The prophet tells us in the Koran that there is only One God – Allah.

We may well have heard different answers to that question from the pulpit with a variety of illustrations intended to explain the doctrine. Our real difficulty with it is a perennial problem of trying to squeeze God

into words. God the Holy Trinity is a wonderful experience beyond words – to be felt rather than explained, as Jesus told Nicodemus.

At least, that is my personal experience. I am grateful for never having a time when I considered God not being around – at home and church where his presence was assumed and at school where he was often welcomed into assemblies. Gradually, my faith and understanding grew to a point where in the company of others I was introduced to Jesus whom I discovered was God in his human form – like us and personally understandable to us. Later, my faith developed into experiences of the Holy Spirit – through prayer and scripture study it was like God being in me, making me more like Jesus. There was and is still a long way to go, but what I had experienced was all one and the same God!

By Trinity Sunday we have completed the annual pilgrimage of the church calendar, following the Gospel story from Advent and Christmas, through Passion and Resurrection to Ascension and Pentecost. Now Trinity Sunday sets the seal on the whole story. Today's readings help to make the Trinity experience real. My personal favourite psalm is among them – *God in the Storm*. It portrays a powerful vision of God in all his greatness as creator of everything in the cosmos and beyond. A voice of thunder echoing across the ocean, terrifying flashes of lightning, earthquakes and windstorms stripping the Lebanon cedars, and heaving up mountains of desert sand while everything, everywhere shouts – *Glory to God!* It is a wonderful performance!

Isaiah's experience is akin to that in a form which is still a pattern for our worship today. It is good to sit with this reading for a while and let the imagination flow free. God is in his Temple, enthroned, surrounded by flaming heavenly creatures - like a choir singing, *Holy, holy, holy. The Lord Almighty is holy!* The prophet is humbled, penitent for himself and his people, then forgiven and made ready to hear God speak with a challenge to ministry and service. The climax to the worship is Isaiah's act of surrender and commitment. *'I'm here, Lord. Send me!'*

All this speaks of our experiences of God. Then we move on to the account of Jesus' evening interview with Nicodemus. He was a gentler Pharisee who recognised that the truth and power of God was in Jesus. He was not ready, as John explains, to see Jesus as *Son of God*, - God with us in a way we could know him and believe in him personally. Jesus went on to explain that there is more. *It's like being born all over again.* Nicodemus wants to know *how?* He learns that God's Spirit - like Jesus - can live in him and everyone who believes in him, and God wants that for everyone! Paul takes us on from there. If you share this new life in God with his Spirit in you, he says, then you are obliged to live the life of Jesus. You are God's family! Let the family likeness show!

If you are still with me, you will see I have been trying to explain 'God as Trinity' Far easier to listen to Jesus speaking to Nicodemus - *Like the wind, don't try to explain it. Open the window and let God blow through all your life.* Trinity Sunday! It sets a seal on the Gospel and enables us to say - *I believe in One God - all of him! Glory!*

A Prayer [from Psalm 29]

*Father! You blow our minds with thoughts of your power and glory.
It feels at times like standing in a storm of wind, thunder and lightning
with the whole created world around us crying, Glory!
It is beyond words, but we stand here with Jesus, filled and enveloped in your Holy Spirit,
wanting all our life to show and speak, Glory to God!*

