

Holy Trinity 7th June 2020

Trinity Sunday

Isaiah 40:12-31 Matthew 28:16-20

Trinity Sunday

Prayer

We have too often exchanged the worship of the living God for idols of our own imagining.

As we gather to utter our praises to the holy and undivided Trinity, and to worship him in spirit and truth, let us call to mind our sins.

Father, you come to meet us when we return to you:

Lord, have mercy.

Lord, have mercy.

Jesus, you died on the cross for our sins:

Christ, have mercy.

Christ, have mercy.

Spirit, you give us life and peace:

Lord, have mercy.

Lord, have mercy.

We come boldly to the throne of grace,
praying to the almighty God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit for mercy and grace.

Father of heaven, whose love profound - a ransom for our souls has found:

We pray for the world, created by your love, for its nations and governments.

Especially, we pray for the US at this difficult and tragic time.

We pray for healing in the various communities.

We pray for the political leaders throughout the world that they may be men and women of peace.

Give them wisdom in what they say - and care for all their peoples.

Extend to them your peace, pardoning love, mercy and grace.

Almighty Son, incarnate Word, our Prophet, Priest, Redeemer, Lord:

We pray for the Church, created for your glory -

for its ministry to reflect those works of yours.

We pray for our church leaders at these difficult times – that they,

and we, may be bold in the proclamation of the Good News and willing to stand up against all injustice and evil.

Give them wisdom as we move out of lockdown into greater times of freedom.

Extend to us your salvation, growth, mercy and grace.

Eternal Spirit, by whose breath the soul is raised from sin and death:

We pray for families and individuals, created in your image -

for the lonely, the bereaved, the sick and the dying.

We pray for hearts and minds to be transformed – and to bow down to the name of Jesus.

Breathe on them the breath of life and bring them to your mercy and grace.

We pray now that you will speak to us afresh through your Word. **AMEN.**

READINGS: Isaiah 40:12-31 Matthew 28:16-20

There are many themes in Scripture that I just love to preach on.

The Trinity is one of them.

The reason being that it seems to me that the Christian Faith stands or falls on this doctrine.

Everything that makes Christianity unique depends on in.

If the Trinity isn't true – we may as well pack up our bags.

Because then Jesus becomes no different than any other religious teacher or prophet who has ever lived.

Having said that, it may surprise you that I'm not going to spend this sermon looking at the biblical evidence – of which there's much – for the Trinity.

Rather I'm going to look at its significance:

For us today.

For us living in a world of COVID-19

For us facing the reality of human wickedness – reflected in the appalling inhumanity of say, racism – and the heartless killing of George Floyd.

Let me begin with a clear statement of the Christian belief in the Trinity from the second reading, Matthew 28:19, Jesus says to His followers that they should 'make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit'.

There it is: 'in the name [singular – there is one God] of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit [three Persons]'.

Some find that difficult.

You may well know the encounter that Jesus had with the Samaritan women told us in John 4.

She and Jesus get into a bit of a theological discussion.

Eventually, Jesus says to her, possibly slightly exasperated, 'God is spirit, and his worshippers must worship in spirit and in truth.' (John 4:24)

Of course, scholars have debated, and still debate, what Jesus meant by 'in spirit and in truth.'

The *Good News Bible* I think gets around the problem well by translating it '[God]as He really is'.

I like that.

You see whether we understand the Trinity or not – doesn't matter one iota.

God doesn't cease to be a Trinity – just because we don't understand it!

So what is God like? Which brings me to the passage I want to focus on this morning.

Isaiah 40

There's much in this chapter.

But let me highlight what seem to me some key thoughts in it.

The Chapter begins with those wonderful words, 'Comfort, comfort my people, says your God.'

The people of Israel were returning to Jerusalem after the Exile in Babylon.

They were rightly ashamed of themselves.

No doubt they were expecting even more punishment.

But Isaiah foresees a Messenger running to Jerusalem and declaring, verse 9, 'Here is your God!'

The next two verses just expand on that a little, verse 10: 'the Sovereign LORD comes with power' – a little scary
verse 11 – 'He tends his flock like a shepherd: He gathers the lambs in his arms and carries them close to his heart' –
PHEW!

The rest of this chapter could be summed up by saying – 'our God is God as He really is'.

God is the Creator of all.

To God – what seem to us like unbelievable feats – are, in fact, activities of His greatness.

Verse 12, 'Who has measured the waters in the hollow of his hand, or with the breadth of his hand marked of the heavens?'

The answer, of course, is God.

Using anthropomorphisms – in other words – describing God in human terms – Isaiah is simply saying that the power of God is seen in all He has done.

I've never ceased to be dumbstruck by the greatness – in every sense of God's Creation.

In verses 12-17 – Isaiah is simply saying: God is supremely powerful.

Everything that exists, exists because of Him!

Verses 18-26 begin, 'To whom, then, will you compare God?'

The point is that all alternatives are either imitations or deceptions.

All other 'gods' are what the Bible calls idols – man-made 'gods'.

Verse 19: 'As for an idol, a craftsman casts it, and a goldsmith overlays it with gold and fashions silver chains for it.' The stupidity of worshipping such 'gods' is obvious.

This section ends, verses 25-26: 'To whom will you compare me? Or who is my equal?' says the Holy One. Lift your eyes and look to the heaven: Who created all these? He who brings out the starry host one by one, and calls them each by name. Because of this great power and mighty strength, not one of them is missing.'

If that is what God is life then all other 'gods' – we may call them 'idols' whatever they may be – are a con.

If you want to give your life to a purpose – it makes sense to make sure that that purpose actually is true.

Jesus, famously said, John 14:6, 'I am the way and the truth and the life. No-one comes to the Father except through me.'

So we see that the nature of God is also fulfilled in a person – God the Son, Jesus Christ.

The final verses of this chapter speak of a God who is with us to help us.

Isaiah asks, verse 27, 'Why do you say, O Jacob, and complain [we're good at that], O Israel, "My way is hidden from the LORD; my cause is disregarded by my God"?''

To which the answer is, verses 28-31: 'Do you not know have you not heard? The LORD is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth.'

That really summarises what he has just explained.

'He will not grow tired or weary, and his understanding no-one can fathom.'

God is not a man-made creation, unlike the idols, His power and reality is unending.

Isaiah continues wonderfully, 'He gives strength to the weary, and increases the power of the weak.'

Jesus says again in John 14, this time verses 15-17, 'If you love me, you will obey what I command. and I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counsellor to be with you for ever – the Spirit of truth.'

The Greek word translated 'Counsellor' is an interesting one.

It is the word *paraklētos* or 'paraclete' (as it is sometimes translated).

It means literally 'someone called alongside', that is, to help.

Some translations have 'Helper', others 'Advocate'.

Whatever the case it seems to describe the character of God as expressed in these closing words of Isaiah 40: 'He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak.... those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength...'

In human terms 'even youths grow tired and weary, and young men stumble and fall,'

and here comes the great promise:

'but those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.'

So we see in this chapter every person of the Trinity represented.

The Nicene Creed summarises these qualities perfectly:

'I believe in one God, the Father the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, and of all that is, seen and unseen.'

'[I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ] who is 'God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God'

In other words Jesus is completely and utterly distinct from and yet identical to the Father.

'I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life...'

So what does the Trinity say to us in these days of uncertainty?

'It tells us that the God who created all that there is – cares –

and will, because He is the God who is, and because He has power,

restore all things – put right the wrongs and evils, prevalent in the world.

Let me end by asking a question:

'In what ways does knowing God as a Trinity help or encourage you in times of difficulty – such as we, and the world, face at the moment?'

Prayer

Psalm 8

1 Lord, our Lord,
how majestic is your name in all the earth!
You have set your glory
in the heavens.
2 Through the praise of children and infants
you have established a stronghold against your enemies,
to silence the foe and the avenger.
3 When I consider your heavens,
the work of your fingers,
the moon and the stars,
which you have set in place,
4 what is mankind that you are mindful of them,
human beings that you care for them? 8:4 Or what is a human being that you are mindful of him, / a son of man that
you care for him?
5 You have made them 8:5 Or him a little lower than the angels 8:5 Or than God
and crowned them 8:5 Or him with glory and honour.
6 You made them rulers over the works of your hands;
you put everything under their 8:6 Or made him ruler...; / ...his feet:
7 all flocks and herds,
and the animals of the wild,
8 the birds in the sky,
and the fish in the sea,
all that swim the paths of the seas.
9 Lord, our Lord,
how majestic is your name in all the earth!

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Today's Collect

Almighty and everlasting God,
you have given us your servants grace,
by the confession of a true faith,
to acknowledge the glory of the eternal Trinity
and in the power of the divine majesty to worship the Unity:
keep us steadfast in this faith,
that we may evermore be defended from all adversities;
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now
and for ever.

Amen.

**Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Lead us not into temptation
but deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours
now and for ever.
Amen.**