

Reflection for Trinity Sunday 12th June 2022

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Anyone who has heard me preach on Trinity Sunday will remember my visual aid – a three-legged wooden cake stand, the interlocking legs having been carved out of one piece of wood, distinct but inseparable. The plate in the middle represents us, held up by God, Father, Son and Spirit. Occasionally I use a sermon I've used before and wonder if people will remember it. I think that generally people don't remember but they do remember the visual aids and illustrations. Therefore, let me assure you that the sermon today is new and fresh even if you remember the visual aid!

Today we celebrate Trinity Sunday and the truth that God is much bigger and more wonderful than our imaginations can grasp – and more complicated too! Trinity is not a word found in the Bible. It was not until the ninth century that the first Sunday after Pentecost was popularly celebrated as Trinity Sunday. However the concept of the Trinity was around long before that. It is a word that describes the biblical truth about the relationship between God the Father, and God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.

If we go right back to the beginnings of the Jewish nation in Genesis and Exodus we see that one of the most important truths God wanted to teach his people was that there was only one true God. The nations around them worshipped

many different gods. For example in Deuteronomy 6:4 Moses said to the people *“These are the commands, decrees and laws the Lord your God directed me to teach you to observe in the land that you are crossing the Jordan to possess... ‘Hear O Israel: The Lord our God is **one** Lord. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.”*

The fact that there was only one God was very important to the Jews.

But then Jesus comes on the scene and during the three years the disciples spent with Jesus they come to believe in him as the Messiah. In Mark 8:21 we read *“But what about you?” [Jesus] asked. “Who do you say I am?” Peter answered, “You are the Messiah.”* They see that somehow God is uniquely present in Jesus. Later Jesus left them. However, they then experienced God’s transforming power through the Holy Spirit. We looked at this last Sunday at Pentecost.

The early Jews believed in God the Father, but also came to understand and accept that Jesus was God and the Holy Spirit was God, whilst retaining their belief that God is One. One God in three persons.

Trinity is about relationship, the relationship between God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit and his relationship with us.

Do you ever feel lonely? I think we all do at times. A partner dies, the children grow up and leave home or a friend moves

away. I remember my mother saying that in over 70 years she had never lived on her own until after Dad died. Something she never really got used to. Loneliness is considered one of the biggest problems we face in our society today and is thought to be a contributing factor to many early deaths.

We were not made to be alone. In Genesis 1 v 27 it says *“God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.”* Genesis 2 v18 *“The Lord God said, “It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him.”*

We don't often think about it, but God is not alone. He is Trinity. This is something that goes right back to the beginning of time. Genesis 1 v 26 *Then God said, “Let **us** make mankind in our image, in **our** likeness.”* God is not an individual but a relational being. We are created in his image, in the image of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. We need community. We were not made for isolation.

Now let's look briefly at our reading from Romans 5. The Living Bible puts it this way, *“So now, since we have been made right in God's sight by faith in his promises, we can have real peace with him because of what Jesus Christ our Lord has done for us. ² For because of our faith, he has brought us into this place of highest privilege where we now stand, and we confidently and joyfully look forward to actually becoming all that God has had in mind for us to be.”*

What he is doing here is establishing those who belong to Jesus as the true covenant family, those in whom all the promises given to Israel have come true. It is very sad when there is a split in family relationships, when some members will not talk to other members for whatever reason. That is how many people are with God. Yet God offers us reconciliation, ‘Since we have been declared right with God ...’ we have a warm glow? a sense of relief? a new understanding? Yes all those and more. We have peace with God, we have family.

The next couple of verses show us how our faith grows, *“We can rejoice, too, when we run into problems and trials, for we know that they are good for us—they help us learn to be patient. ⁴ And patience develops strength of character in us and helps us trust God more each time we use it until finally our hope and faith are strong and steady.”* We have someone constantly with us to guide and support us.

And verse 5 summarises the outcome, *“Then, when that happens, we are able to hold our heads high no matter what happens and know that all is well, for we know how dearly God loves us, and we feel this warm love everywhere within us because God has given us the Holy Spirit to fill our hearts with his love.”* We have peace with God because of Jesus, and the Holy Spirit fills our hearts with God’s love.

The relationships between Father, Son and Spirit are described for our benefit not theirs. Our short Gospel reading is from a passage when Jesus is preparing his

disciples for what is soon to come – his death, resurrection and ascension. He tells his disciples that they will not be left alone as they will have the Holy Spirit.

From the Living Bible John 16 *“Oh, there is so much more I want to tell you, but you can’t understand it now. ¹³ When the Holy Spirit, who is truth, comes, he shall guide you into all truth, for he will not be presenting his own ideas, but will be passing on to you what he has heard. He will tell you about the future. ¹⁴ He shall praise me and bring me great honour by showing you my glory. ¹⁵ All the Father’s glory is mine; this is what I mean when I say that he will show you my glory.”*

The Spirit will glorify Jesus because what he receives from Jesus he will make know to us. All that belongs to the Father also belongs to Jesus.

Going back to the cake stand, the plate in the middle which represents us, is held in place by one piece of wood carefully crafted into three legs representing Almighty God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

One other point worth mentioning, If God is Trinity then equality is at the heart of what it means to be human. My cake stand would collapse if the legs were different lengths. Inequality in the world causes a lot of pain and trouble. The three persons of the trinity are equal – the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit – they are not in a hierarchy, they are co-equal, constantly giving and receiving from one another.

Jesus said (v15) ***All** that belongs to the Father is mine. That is why I said the Spirit will receive from me what he will make known to you.*

Equality is at the very heart of the Trinity and the very heart of what it means to be a Christian. None of us are either better or worse than anyone one else. This is a message we need to believe of ourselves and pass on to the world around us.