

Trinity Sunday: The Trinity in the Toothpaste Tube

[2 Corinthians 13: 11-14](#), [Matthew 28: 16-20](#)

Last Sunday we celebrated Pentecost, the day on which the disciples received the gift of the Holy Spirit. This week we celebrate a fundamental part of our faith: that our God is one, and that God is also the three persons of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. This is something which we can often struggle to comprehend – and that’s not surprising, since we are humans, bound by our human understanding of personhood, and existence, and God is... God!

Battles have been fought through the ages as the Church Fathers attempted to clarify exactly what we mean by this three-person, one God mystery. At the Council of Nicaea in 325 AD one bishop Nicholas (who we think of as that lovely, cuddly, bearded Father Christmas Saint Nicholas) got so angry when he heard Bishop Arius of Egypt argue that Jesus the Son was not equal to God the Father that he punched him.

I hope that there won’t be any quarrels among us, but that we will indeed journey together gracefully and graciously in our understanding of this deep mystery: that God is one, but also three persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

I hope that this tube of toothpaste will help you to reflect further.



Our first reading: [2 Corinthians 13: 11-14](#).

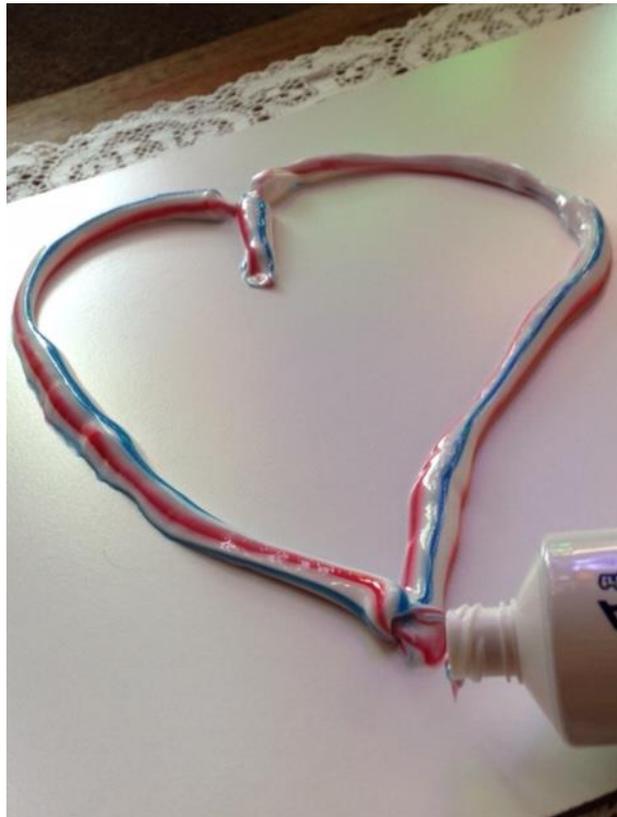
Paul's closing remarks in 2 Corinthians are a blessing to what had become a divided, fractious church.

¹¹ Finally, brothers and sisters, rejoice! Strive for full restoration, encourage one another, be of one mind, live in peace. And the God of love and peace will be with you.

¹² Greet one another with a holy kiss. ¹³ All God's people here send their greetings.

¹⁴ May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

We reflect on verse 14. We say this "grace" together so often, using it to conclude some church services and at our PCC meetings, changing that pronoun "you" to "us". But what does it mean?



Look at this toothpaste heart:

- The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ: his endless love for us, shown in his death upon the cross and his wonderful resurrection for our sakes. No matter what we've done in the past, we can be forgiven, loved and restored. The church at Corinth had got into some blazing disputes among themselves, but despite that, the grace of Jesus Christ remained present in and for each one. We are all works of Jesus' grace.
- The love of God: look at the outline of this heart. All three stripes follow that shape. There is utter unity, but also three distinct persons. God is love. His heart is to love us.
- The Fellowship of the Holy Spirit: The Holy Spirit is with us, enabling us to work together as God's family, and to pray to God the Father.
- "be with you all" – do we rush around and try to earn God's approval, or to compete for his favour? That little word "be" is so important, and particularly so in our time of lockdown, where it's difficult to "do" in the way that we might normally be doing so many things. Let's learn how to "be" – to rest in God's presence, to be enfolded in his love and grace.

Our second reading: [Matthew 28: 16-20](#)

The great commission

¹⁶ Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. ¹⁷ When they saw him, they worshipped him; but some doubted. ¹⁸ Then Jesus came to them and said, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹ Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.'

Jesus' Great Commission sends us all out to "make disciples of all nations." It's part of what happens at baptism – we're called to pass the good news on, using those three persons of the Trinity: "the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit."

Our toothpaste also offers us a valuable illustration of this point, too: when you've squeezed the toothpaste out of the tube, you can't pour it back in again!

So it is with our experience of the grace and love of God – once you've experienced it, you will be changed, you can't put God back in the box.

Our Collect for this Trinity Sunday

Holy God, faithful and unchanging:
enlarge our minds with knowledge of your truth,
and draw us more deeply into the mystery of your love,
that we may truly worship you,
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever. Amen

Rev'd Vick Barrett