

SUMMARY: TRINITY SUNDAY

Mt.3:16; Luke 3:2; John 14:2; John 15:26; Acts 1:4; Acts 2:33; Galatians 4:6; Ephesians 2:18; Titus 3:6; Matthew 28:19; 2 Corinthians 13:14

And so, why the Trinity? Why is it so important that we, as Christ-followers, believe with all our hearts that we are called to hold this difficult and mysterious doctrine as one of the foundation stones of our faith? Wouldn't it be far easier for us just to believe in God as a single deity and treat Jesus Christ simply as a really good man? Isn't that just what most other credible world religions do – so why don't we? Just how are we to understand it all?

We've all heard the analogies that so many of our well-meaning Sunday school teachers over the years have used to try to get our linear-thinking, logic-dominated minds to grasp something of what it all could possibly mean. The church has really struggled with this over the centuries.

We know that so much of our everyday communication relies on metaphors. We use images and references to things we know in order to describe things we don't know too much about. It's a way of making the abstract real – and so we speak about *'falling in love'* as if love is a cliff to fall over or a valley to fall into. Or we speak of being ready to *'eat a horse'* trying to express the extent of our hunger, or of *'kicking a habit'* as if stopping smoking or chewing our nails is like a ball to be kicked away. *'...beating someone'* at chess or in a debate as if we are holding a whip. Metaphors are particularly useful especially when it comes to talking about mystical, transcendent realities – as here, e.g., where we are speaking about God, using imperfect Trinitarian analogies or metaphors to make a particular point.

What the Church hopes to embrace and share in this sacred metaphor of God as Holy Trinity is an understanding of the one God who is revealed in scripture, and our experience, certainly within our tradition, as being simultaneously each & all of these three realities:

Firstly, it's God as ever the originator of all love and creativity – God as the original and the still-sparking impulse of all creation. And so, in order to communicate that in the largely patriarchal society of the time Biblical language chooses to speak of God as *Father...* the First Person of the Trinity. Of course that doesn't mean God is exactly like a human father, just that *that's* how we've been given best to describe those wonderful sacred qualities that we associate with the Divine from before all time, to now, and on into all infinity...
Constantly at work in Creation!

And then it's also still always God as the *Son* – both as Jesus, the Son of Man, and as the risen Christ, the Son of God. This is God revealed also in the Second Person of the Trinity. This is God revealed as the One who has intervened and who still intervenes. This is about the God who shows up – who is always actually with us - EMMANUEL – just straining to shake open our closed minds in order to save us from our lack of God-awareness.

It's our love for the physical Jesus that cuts like a laser through our dull indifference in order to draw out our devotion. In the physical reality of Jesus with us we receive *demonstrated in words and tangible action* what God's perfect holiness and intention for all of creation actually was, is, and always will be...

It's because of him that we are given to become aware of God as our Almighty *Lover* always with us ...and aware of ourselves and all creation as the God-soaked, Almighty *Beloved* that we are. Also, by presenting God to us in these familial terms – God as the Father calling God as Jesus Christ the Son, so we are being presented with an achingly beautiful metaphor of tightest possible intimacy - as it exists between an infinitely loving Parent and the most precious first-born child... a sacred familial intimacy within God which is for us to own!

With the Third Person of the Trinity, *the Holy Spirit*, we embrace that aspect of God/that dimension of God who is always mostly about drawing us into that sacred dynamic. This is God's loving power always at work: teasing/ coaxing, wooing us out and on from our smallest selves in order to resonate Godself deep within our souls. I think of this irresistible, swirling vortex of ultimately loving attraction. Some describe this holy movement within the Trinity as a dance of our holy being & living: *Father: Son – Lover: Beloved* – constantly pulsing together in some cosmic rhythm that strains by God's own Third Person of the Holy Trinity – the Spirit - to draw us into an awareness of our place within that dance.

In Jesus Christ, our most loving Creator-God is revealed as existing purely for intimacy with us, unable – *or certainly unwilling* - to be aloof from us. This, as we said, is God Emmanuel – with us! The Spirit seals that for us by making us thirst for it, drawing us in, and so making our ultimate awareness of our place within God's sacred intimacy possible & real! That is perhaps the single biggest difference between Christianity and most other beautiful religious faiths... This faith of ours is not ever about just our devotion or obedience but, most essentially, it's about our most-alive participation!

A common Biblical metaphor for describing this participation of ours within God is our place at a wedding banquet where, for example in Mt.22:9, the king's instructions to his servants: ***Go into the main streets, and invite everyone you find to the wedding banquet.*** And so we're told how ¹⁰ ***Those servants went out into the streets and gathered all whom they found, both good and bad; so the wedding hall was filled with guests.***

That is still always God's plan. This is the wonderfully inclusive dynamic that exists all through whomever, wherever and whatever God touches – and God touches everything! God includes everything! Of course, we struggle with that. It seems somehow to be too good to be true. And so we complicate it, we want to exclude whatever and whomever we choose to call bad or unworthy! And as we try to bring that exclusive duality into God's economy, we do so much harm!

As we read on in that Matthew text we see how there was one guest at that banquet: ***“...who was not wearing a wedding robe,¹² and when the king asked why not, there was no answer. And so¹³ ...the king said to the attendants, ‘Bind him hand and foot, and throw him into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’*** Seriously? Folks aren't too sure about how to interpret this – but I think I agree with those who explain how in Jesus' tradition a king would typically, generously, have offered special clothing for the banquet guests and that – probably – this man had rejected that offer, leaving some to suggest that the wedding garment he rejected represents his rejection of being covered by the all-embracing inclusivity of God's love. Remember how Paul spoke in 1 Col.3:12ff of love as ***‘the all-purpose garment that we should never be without.’***

I think it's true that this man represents those of us who want simply to be included within whatever we decide are kind of the benefits of being within God's love-banquet but are there on our own terms. **NO!** Jesus taught elsewhereⁱⁱ, ***"If you love me, show it by doing what I've told you"***. The Trinitarian truth of God is that while all are clearly being drawn into this infinity of God's love, our putting on the poured-out, radically inclusive love of God as demonstrated in and through the life, teachings, death and resurrection of Jesus the Christ is what is offered us as the shortest and clearest way of our participating in it.

The Holy Trinity is not a religious dogma for us to understand so much as a way of understanding – it's the sacred perspective, the context, from which we look out at all the cosmos. It's a way of inclusively loving/living that brings us into a holy appreciation of everything as sacred. The Trinity is not about something for us to try better just to believe, it is as something for us to be drawn into, and then to live out from. I think that is mostly what Christ meant by describing Himself as the Way, Truth and Life...

While I have no doubt that people of other faiths or even of no faith are capable of being drawn into their awareness of the all-inclusive love of God – what *I do know* is that the way of Jesus Christ is given to us as a most direct way... Jesus is the shortcut that God offers to all of creation!

How have you engaged with that Way of Jesus Christ?

To what extent have you allowed your faith-living to be drawn into a Trinitarian living within God? With Jesus as our centre, we can know this - that: ...somehow, God is both always with us, and never finished with us: always drawing, always releasing... and that as we allow ourselves to be increasingly drawn into an awareness of our place within the Trinitarian heart of God, so every moment of every day of our lives is empowered by God's Spirit to be part of that Holy dance... May that truly be our reality: forming us in terms of our best identity, and informing us in terms of our best purpose.

May it be so, in Jesus' Name

Amen

Rev Robin Jacobson

ⁱ *So, chosen by God for this new life of love, dress in the wardrobe God picked out for you: compassion, kindness, humility, quiet strength, discipline. Be even-tempered, content with second place, quick to forgive an offense. Forgive as quickly and completely as the Master forgave you. And regardless of what else you put on, wear love. It's your basic, all-purpose garment. Never be without it. (Message)*

ⁱⁱ John.14:15