

Sunday Morning Resources

Sunday 26 May 2024 - Trinity Sunday

Lectionary Readings (depending on the kind of service you are leading, you may use one or more of the following readings – however, you **must** use the gospel reading, as this is what the homily is based on)

Isaiah 6.1-8; Psalm 29; Romans 8.12-17; John 3.1-17

Homily

Today's homily has been written by the Revd David Newton, Diocesan Director of Ordinands

Today we stand at the end of a long liturgical journey.

We have waited in eager expectation for the messiah's birth. We have heard of the Christ who was born in a stable, lived as a refugee, and grew up in a backwater.

We have remembered the beginning of his ministry: his baptism by John; his time in the wilderness; his proclamation of 'Good News for the Poor'. We have walked with him through Holy Week and to the cross. We have stood with the disciples, and we heard the chorus, 'he is risen'. We have watched as Christ ascended into glory; waited in prayer for the coming Spirit; and have been sent out empowered with the fire of Love at Pentecost.

Here we are today at the end of the story. Or perhaps we could also say the beginning, for this is where our story takes off from. And here, at the end of the story, at the beginning of our story, we learn to speak of God as Trinity. For saying that God is Trinity is just a short-hand way of encapsulating the whole story we have heard since Christmas.

As many of you will know, the doctrine of the Trinity is not something that appears all worked out in the pages of scripture. Instead, the doctrine of the Trinity is the inevitable conclusion to the early Christians' reflection on how God has revealed Godself to be in the person of Jesus Christ and in the outworking of the Spirit.

Or, to put it a different way, the doctrine of the Trinity is the most concise expression of the Good News you could possibly imagine. We hear it in those words from Romans 8. God whom we call Abba, Father – the maker, who is our maker, our life-giver. God who we call Son, who calls us to be sons and daughters with him. God the Spirit who raises our hearts back to Godself.

One God in three ways. And in this 'three ways' is the entirety of the good news.

One way of thinking about this is by turning to the language of gift.

God is the one who gives in love, God is the *gift* of love who joins with us, God is *the power of that gift* that returns us back into the arms of love. God the Giver. God the Gift. God the Giving. One God in three Ways.

To affirm God as Trinity is not then about saying that God is three things and one thing all at the same time, in some mathematical nonsense. Nor is it saying that behind these three ways of being is some hidden and mysterious fourth thing.

Instead, to affirm that God is Trinity is a way of talking about God that simply comes out of the story of Jesus Christ. This is what we discover of God when we hear the story once again of Jesus' birth, life, death, resurrection, ascension, and the giving of the Spirit. All of this story is encapsulated when we baptise someone in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

The Trinity is – in the sense at least – really quite simple. It is the shortest way of expressing the story of Jesus, it is a summary of the Good News. It is a way of speaking about God who descends from glory, to join in the muck and the mess, who takes the pain and perversions of humanity onto Godself, who takes all creation up into glory, and who in this time, in these middle times, leaves us not comfortless. God who is Giver, Gift, and the power of Giving.

So, presented with the question, 'what is the Gospel?' The most concise answer there is, is, 'The Trinity!' (Although I would not recommend giving this answer if you're asked on the street). It encapsulates the whole story of our Faith.

To say God is Trinity also means affirming something about God's own "inner" life, before us, for all eternity: that God is not a static unity, but rather that God's own life is a dynamic relating loving dance. And so that at the heart of 'things' (or we could say at the heart of reality) is Love.

The Doctrine of the Trinity affirms above all else, that the Universe is founded upon, and held by, and will find its end in Love – in the Love that is God's very own life.

So once again, what is the Gospel? The answer - The Trinity. Which is a short-hand way of saying that Love is at the heart of all things; that love that has been shared with us and been made known to us.

The stumbling block of all this, at least for me, is not around some logical nonsense, as if we were proclaiming $3 = 1$ or whatever. (We're not, and we never have). Instead, the difficult thing – perhaps even more so at the moment – is believing that, despite what we see, the last and final Word is not death and darkness but is in fact Love. It is sometimes hard to believe that the universe has its meaning and purpose, beginning and end, in a Word of Love, but that is precisely what a life of faith is all about. It's all about Love, actually. Amen.

Ways to Engage all Generations

When different generations are gathered together in worship there is an opportunity to build relationships and to encounter God in our conversations as we build relationships and learn from each other no matter what our ages, stage of life or faith and for all present to feel included. Adding some wondering questions to the service at an appropriate moment can help to do this.

Wondering Questions: Some wondering questions that may help to engage all generations to ponder and explore during the talk, service or during the week may include (three or so) of the following style of questions:

- I wonder if you find the idea of the Trinity confusing?
- I wonder if we can learn the verse John 3.16 all together?
- I wonder what you think about the idea of being 'born again'?

Suggested intercessions

Lord God of hosts, you are always asking, "Whom shall I send?" Give each of us the courage of Isaiah to respond, "Here am I, send me."

Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of hosts: **The whole earth is full of your glory.**

You are beautiful, Lord God, because you are holy, and your voice is all powerful. Give strength to your people and give the blessings of your peace.

Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of hosts: **The whole earth is full of your glory.**

Spirit of God, when we are fearful you ask us, "Why? Are you not my adopted ones?"

Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of hosts: **The whole earth is full of your glory.**

Lord Jesus Christ, you speak to us of heavenly things, even when we are most interested in earthly things. Speak to us in the night-times of our lives, that we may learn the Way and the Will of your Holy Spirit.

Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of hosts: **The whole earth is full of your glory.**

The problems of the nations, the politics of parties, the threats and fears of peoples everywhere are all known to you, Almighty God. Save us from fear, greed, revenge, and all evil things that keep us away from love.

Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of hosts: **The whole earth is full of your glory.**

The dying, the sick, the lonely and the forsaken are your special people, for you know the names of each, even as we call upon you, once again, to remember them _____.

Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of hosts: **The whole earth is full of your glory.**

Come Holy Spirit, come with your life-giving care and joy. **Amen.**

— written by Paul Sauer, and posted on the **Lutheran**

Forum website. <http://www.lutheranforum.org/>

Suggested hymns/songs

- "Holy, holy, holy! Lord God Almighty!"
- "Praise to the Lord, the Almighty, the King of Creation"
- "O worship the King, all glorious above"
- "Great is thy faithfulness, O God my Father"
- "Praise my soul, the King of heaven"
- "Give thanks with a grateful heart"
- "Father God, I wonder"
- "At the Name of Jesus"
- "Dear Lord and Father of mankind"
- "To God be the glory, great things he has done!"
- + Various other worship songs beginning 'Holy, holy, holy'.

Activities to accompany the service:

If you are looking for resources to accompany the service for engaging younger children, then there are lots of online resources. The following free to access/download resources may be useful starting points:

- <https://flamecreativekids.blogspot.com/>
- <https://www.pinterest.co.uk/MessyChurchBRF/>
- <https://www.faithinkids.org/>
- reflectionary.org – lectionary-based resources
- engageworship – in particular 'Area 52' for lectionary-based material
- <https://www.bdeducation.org.uk/product-category/primary-age-5-11/>
(weekly@lectionary resource)