

Sunday, June 7, 2020

Genesis 1:1-24; 2 Cor.13:11-13, Matthew 28:16-20

“The Trinity:3 in 1”

“Holy,holy, holy...God in three persons blessed Trinity!” this is a beloved hymn of our faith and for many raised in the church it was this song which opened up worship time each Sunday morning. Because of this experience, this beloved hymn has been updated, revived, recorded and shared again for the next generation of believers. But the words written almost 200 years ago (1826) by Reginald Heber still call us together to worship and praise God- the Trinity: Father, Son and Holy Spirit; Creator, Redeemer Sustainer: Creator, Christ and Spirit. It is this Trinitarian formula that we are connected with our Christian sisters and brothers around the world for it is these words that we use when we celebrate the sacrament of baptism and welcome people of different ages into the family of God. This is our Christian understanding of God!

On this Trinity Sunday we look to God who is best understood from our Christian perspective as three in one. But for many people this doctrinal concept of understanding God is still difficult as we strive to get our thoughts into picturing God as all three at once. Maybe just maybe this is what is so difficult-to imagine God in all three ways like how we see a tricycle. Imagine a three wheeled vehicle right now. What one visualizes is a piece of metal with one big wheel in the front a central piece of metal with a seat and then two smaller wheels the same size in the back. Yet when we look at this tricycle, the wheels are not all the same. So this image does not fully explain the Trinity but it still might help us with our human understanding of God.

The Bible does not use the word Trinity per se but when we look at specific passages such as what were just read, we glean from these words the ideas of God existence in different ways. Our Genesis reading recalls the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God or Spirit swept over the face of the waters. We then learn of how God created all that there is by His hand. But we must note that the Spirit hovered over the water as the Creator called the world into existence. This is the first story of Creation from the Old Testament Genesis.

if we turn to the New Testament to John 1 we read: “In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him and without him not one thing came into being. What has come

into being in him was life and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness and the darkness did not overcome it.”

If we look at this passage along with Genesis 1 there are similarities because in Genesis, God speaks words and things happen. In John 1, the Word is Jesus Christ who was with God and in God and was present at the time of the creation. God spoke and the world came into existence. The Word of God- Jesus- came into this world for the purpose of bringing people back to God—from the darkness to the light. Jesus is the light of the world and it is for this purpose that Jesus left heaven, lived a human life to bring transformation of all and reconciliation with the creator for all time.

It is through Jesus’ human presence we can understand our potential relationship with God. Jesus lived a human life and during that time he spoke of His Heavenly Father and that he would be returning to him and preparing places for all of us who believe. Jesus had left his place with the Father and came to the earth as His Son knowing his destiny was to die and rise again as the Risen Christ. He lived as a human being yet at the same time lived as God’s Son. He knew that he would return to the Father and would send the Spirit to be with those who believe. And this Spirit is what swept over the face of the waters at the time of creation. When Jesus ascended, he told his followers not to be afraid because the Spirit would come and be with them always. This we recognized as the wind and fire of Pentecost. This Spirit is still with us just as the Creator continues to create and just as Jesus’ story and teachings are ever in our hearts and minds. God is all three in one and through God our lives are changed.

The Spirit is God and God is Spirit. For some people the image of energy moving amongst people is a way to connect with the Spirit but we also experience the Spirit as it connects with our spirits- that is what makes us who we are. The Spirit is within us and around us. Sometimes this Spirit comes as a heavy ball like the wind of a tornado or it could be a gentle whisper of a breeze. It is something felt from within and it can be experienced outside of oneself as well. It depends upon the individuals who are experiencing the Spirit of God and the circumstances in which they find themselves

My sons like Lego construction sets and gave me a what I thought was a simple set to make. The set is called Creator and is a 3 in 1 set. What this means is that the 114 pieces in the box are required to make 3 different toys. But the catch is that you can only make one toy at a time and have a few extras left over. So following one of the 3 instruction books included with the kit, I set out to make a helicopter. I was able to complete it and had a few extra parts- pieces

I did not need for a helicopter. The extra pieces would be used to create one of the other toys a boat or airplane. Again, I could only make one of the toys and if I want to make either the boat or airplane I would have to take apart the helicopter. Why it is named creator? My thought is because the builder can create whichever toy they want but only one at a time! Maybe this is reflective of one way to know God as Creator. God's creation continues and renews itself with the birth of babies as the life cycle renews itself. So when we think of God as Creator there is an ongoing relationship of what is being made new and renewed each day. But we can understand this creator because God saw what He had made and it was good.

But do we see and understand God in the other two persons—Jesus and Spirit? For some people the concept of the Trinity of God is difficult because we often see concentric circles/ triangles and crosses intertwined to symbolize God in three persons and this might not be too helpful. But if we reflect for a moment on what is depicted these three integrated circles look like the symbol of Ontario with three petals of the trillium flower. Or if we look at the equilateral triangle whose angles are the same and each side is of the same size. These images enable us to realize that God is all three and all three are equal and all three were present at the time of creation, when Jesus the human baby was born and dying on the cross and when the Spirit came in the mighty wind and fire at Pentecost. God was and is present in all forms and at all times.

What does this mean for us for are living through a pandemic affecting people around the world? Why should we wonder about who God is as 3 persons when our world is in need of healing and peace? What does the racial justice issues in the US tell us about our need for God and Jesus message to love? Well maybe just maybe all of what we are experiencing in this world right now has a lot to do with God!

In these last weeks there have been many articles, book excerpts and blogs about why this pandemic has entered our world at this time. Some of the reasons cited include: the world is under lockdown because it is God's way of telling everyone to wake up and love and take care of each other because if you don't you are all going to be sick and die. There have been faithful people saying that this time of being at home with your family has been a long time coming. We all need to realize again what is most important- is family and connecting with them in some way on a regular basis and to do so with care. Yes there have been tempers rising, anxiety building and grief due to so many losses. There are people who are just coping as mental health issues have emerged in these weeks when we have been needing to stay home.

Many people have been able to be at home with their children and they are watching the news as it happens from around the world. There have been high tensions and anxieties raised due to decisions made by international leaders. People are responding to these decisions and actions and are not fully aware of the consequences or if they are they are not looking beyond the here and now.

We have all watched scenes in the US with destruction, violence and looting taking place because of the acts of racial injustice that occurred. But there have also been people protesting what occurred and doing so in non-violent ways. They want to see change in policies and procedures adapted around the country and in the world where privilege and inequality has existed for generations. But it is the manner in which these changes are being asked which cause us to ask what would God do/think and respond? But we are the feet and hands of Christ Jesus. So what are we doing? We should be praying like many people around the world so that racism discussions will not only occur on the streets but in our churches whether in person or virtually.

We might also ask where is God in all of this? A New Creed says: "We believe in God: who has created and is creating." And part of what God is creating is within each one of us who believes that there is a new creation a new world emerging. We also believe that God "has come in Jesus, the Word made flesh, to reconcile and make new" This is our task as Jesus taught us to love and care and share with others. He calls us to him to live out our faith and believe in him for through him we are changed. And God "works in us and others by the Spirit." God's Spirit is in the hearts of all people who want to bring about change not just racial justice, but change to how we live and be and care for not just those in our own circles but those beyond our front step. Maybe this pandemic has taught or reminded us that we should value life more and as what our normal was before maybe wasn't so good. Better days are ahead-when we can see loved ones and hold them; when we can go wherever we would like exploring God's wonderful creation and where the Spirit may lead us.

But what we are seeking right now is God's grace and this comes to us in the three persons of the trinity- for this is God's give of new life and hope given through Jesus Christ His Son so that our spirit and further entwine with the Spirit dwelling in us. The Trinity is a doctrine to explain who God is. As Christians we strive to fully know and understand God but mostly, we are able to relate to God in one way at a time. This is because to fully understand who God is will be discovered when we return to him in his heavenly presence. So up until that time, we need to relate to God as we are able- sometimes it is as the Creator overseeing everything;

sometimes it is Jesus who taught us how to live with other people in love and sometimes it is with asking the Spirit to go and do something that we cannot do to reach into the hearts of those who need God and this is our faith being challenged.

A rabbi and soap maker went for a walk together. The soap maker had some negative things to say about religion: "What good is religion? Just look around you. What do you see? Trouble, misery, wars - even after all these years and years of preaching and teaching about goodness, truth, peace. What good is religion with all its prayers and sermons if all this evil still exists?"

The rabbi kept quiet as they continued their walk. Then they noticed a child playing in the gutter. The child was just filthy with dirt and mud. The rabbi said to the soap maker: "Look at this child! Now you say that soap makes people clean, but what good is it? With all the soap in the world this child is still dirty. What good is soap after all?"

The soap maker immediately answered him: "But rabbi, soap can't do its job if it isn't used!" The rabbi said, "The same is true with religion." And our faith with God's grace enables us to connect with God in three persons as our Creator, as followers of the Risen Saviour Jesus and as the Spirit continues to lead us and guide us and stir us to new possibilities. And these possibilities are endless if we just take time to stop and pray.

LET US PRAY: God of grace may your Spirit move amongst us. Our hearts are open to receive your love and to tell others of you as 3 in 1 for you made us, you gave to us Jesus Your Son to be our Saviour and your Spirit is with us and upon us all in these moments. Hear our prayers of hope in this moment. SILENCE. Teach us all to love you and each other. We ask in Jesus' name. Amen.