

Sunday, May 22, 2016

Romans 5:1-5

John 16:12-15

Moving with the Spirit

This morning we sung one of the most beloved hymns that has been in circulation for almost 200 years. It is one hymn which describes the One whom we worship and love-God. But the words are not complete as it says, "God in three persons- blessed Trinity." What is ironic about this is that the Bible does not use the word 'trinity' anywhere yet God is referred to in these three persons: Father, Son and Spirit; Creator, Redeemer, Sustainer, Creator, Christ and Spirit, Creator, Jesus. Spirit. And this idea of God in three persons is and has been a mystery throughout the history of Christianity. What we call God- the Trinity is a mystery.

In the 2006 "A Song of Faith" which as one of several statements of faith of the United Church of Canada we read:

God is Holy Mystery,
beyond complete knowledge,
above perfect description.....

With the Church through the ages,

we speak of God as one and triune:

Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

We also speak of God as

Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer

God, Christ, and Spirit

Mother, Friend, and Comforter

Source of Life, Living Word, and Bond of Love,

and in other ways that speak faithfully of

the One on whom our hearts rely,

the fully shared life at the heart of the universe.

We witness to Holy Mystery that is Wholly Love

God is described here using three persons but using different words which inform us of who God is in relationship with people of faith and how the Three persons inter-relate. Yet this relationship of the Three Persons of God is not clearly understood so in an attempt to do so we use metaphors.

Dr. John Pavelko offers the idea of the Trinity to our current obsession with multi-tasking. You know the ability to do the laundry, make cookies and vacuum at the same time. Or even if look at some of the multi-tasking products we use, like the 3-in-1 Laser Pointer, Stylus, and Ball point pen. This 3-in-1 pen allows you to work faster and easier. This is because you can enter your data into your Smartphone, or PDA with the stylus, rotate the top and sign a contact with the Ball point pen and then if you are working at home like many people do—you can tease your cat with the laser light.

Just think about office technology—long ago was the hand cranked Gestetner or ditto machine which was used to make copies of important teaching documents or even worship bulletins. It was time consuming and took patience to ensure no errors were made as corrections were difficult to make and called strikeovers. Today what do we have? A computer controlled, all in one printer where you can make copies of photos, print, fax, scan and photocopy all of these documents with up to a 50-page auto feeder and they can be collated, stapled and ready for you in a short time.

Dr. Pavelko asks Christians, "With all of these multi-tasking devices, why do we have such difficulty accepting the notion that one God can exist as three persons?" Why as human beings can we not accept that God exists in different ways- to different people even though people have said they know God has called them and moved them beyond the "big man in the sky". But are we willing to hear what God calls us to say and do?

The reality is that the finest and intelligent human minds still cannot cure the common cold, so why do we think we will ever have the ability to understand the workings of God, who is far greater than we are, how is it possible that we could even attempt to understand God's full nature?

We believe that the Spirit of God was present at the time of creation. We affirm a belief in the Son, Jesus Christ. We say that God took on human form, was born as humans are born and he grew up and lived among us in a specific time in

earth's history. He suffered the same trials that we suffered, experienced the same feelings that we experienced. Jesus was purely human and purely divine. Jesus was not God. Jesus was God incarnate—made human. There is a difference. Jesus never drew attention to himself but always pointed to God.

And then Jesus knowing that one day he would return to the Father said that the Spirit of truth would come amongst us. We celebrate the coming of the Spirit throughout this Pentecost season and we rejoice that the spirit moves amongst us and causes us to move in faith to do unto others what Christ teaches through love. Jesus therefore pointed out the relationships between the Father and himself, and he and the Spirit. The relationship between Spirit and Father is not always clear. Yet in Genesis we are reminded that the Spirit was present when the Creator acted and brought forth light out of darkness. God is therefore all three.

Soren Kierkegaard, the great Danish theologian of another century tells this wonderful story of a prince who wanted to find a maiden suitable to be his queen. One day while running an errand in the local village for his father he passed through a poor section. As he glanced out the windows of the carriage his eyes fell upon a beautiful peasant maiden. During the ensuing days he often passed by the young lady and soon fell in love. But he had a problem. How would he seek her hand?

He could order her to marry him. But even a prince wants his bride to marry him freely and voluntarily and not through coercion. He could put on his most splendid uniform and drive up to her front door in a carriage drawn by six horses. But if he did this he would never be certain that the maiden loved him or was simply overwhelmed with all of the splendor. As you might have guessed, the prince came up with another solution. He would give up his kingly robe. He moved, into the village, entering not with a crown but in the garb of a peasant. He lived among the people, shared their interests and concerns, and talked their language. In time the maiden grew to love him for who he was and because he had first loved her.

This very simple story written by Kierkegaard explains what we mean by the Incarnation—God in human form, coming and living amongst humans. It is this

human person of the trinity with which we emulate because Jesus as human helps us to understand God as a whole.

God loves his creation- his people and to show this love Jesus came to us. And through Jesus we identify one who is greater than us but equal to others. Pointing to Jesus we can understand a little bit about God but himself is incomprehensible. But in Jesus Christ we get a glimpse of his glory. In the person of Jesus we are told that God, that mysterious other that created the stars and the universe, is willing to go all of the way, to be one of us, talk our language, eat our food, share our suffering die on a cross. Why? So that a single person, you, me, might be redeemed. And, grow to love Him.

As we reflect on Paul's words to the Romans (ch.5) we come to understand a little more of this Trinity relationship. Justified by faith leads us to God through Jesus; Through Jesus we have faith and experience God's grace and have hope in his glory. Yet we might also rejoice in suffering—produces perseverance, perseverance- character and character hope—Hope is present because God poured out love through the Spirit. And this Spirit is with us always even when we think we are alone. Just how is God =3 persons in relationship with us: Spirit God Jesus; and what connects them are the intangible blessings from God—faith, hope, glory, grace—coming from and going to each of the 3 persons and reaching beyond each petal of the trillium and reaching out to us.

PRAYER:

God of grace we praise you and thank you for who you are and might be to each of us. Bless us as we strive to understand the mystery of the Trinity, and your infinite love. Amen