

Sunday, June 11, 2017

Genesis 1:1 to 2:4

2 Corinthians 13:11-13

Matthew 28:16-20

### Trinity Triplets

Last week we celebrated the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost and how this Spirit continues to lead and guide us. This Spirit is of God and is one way in which God is revealed in our world. Today we are focusing our thoughts on God as the Trinity. You might wonder what I mean by this, but just for a moment I'd like you to consider in what ways God reveals himself to you? That is, in which way have you experienced God?

This is Trinity Sunday a day when we commemorate a reality and doctrine rather than a person or event. We honour the eternal God- Father, Son and Spirit and as we look at the Trinity is it one of the most fascinating and controversial Christian teachings. Often the Trinity is described as a mystery because it is really above our human comprehension to grasp. But we know that in our worship, symbol and faith God is at the centre.

But what is this Trinity? Essentially it is the belief that God is one in essence (ousia-Greek) but distinct in person (hypostasis). This doesn't mean that the persons of the Trinity are human beings but really individual realities that stand on their own.

Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are distinct from each other but completely united in will and essence. Playing a C chord might help—C, E, and G are all distinct notes- but when played together as a chord—the sound is richer and more dynamic. The notes are all equally important in producing the rich sound and if we leave one out—there is something lacking.

God in three persons- blessed Trinity. Just what is the relationship? The Son is said to be eternally BEGOTTEN of the Father, while the Holy Spirit is said to PROCEED from the Father through the Son. Each person—interpenetrates one another and each has distinct roles in both creation and redemption.

Our reading from Genesis tells us that the Father- created the world through the Son and that the Holy Spirit hovered over the waters. Jesus promised the Holy Spirit would come and this Spirit coming is a realization that God is with us. Often when talk about God as Trinity- there is still much to learn. Yet through the years and through symbols we are called to understand the Trinity through what is known as Trinity triplets:

- Creator, Redeemer, Sustainer
- God who creates, God who saves, God who guides
- Earth maker, Pain- bearer Life-giver

- God of the unknown, God the Known, God the worker of Miracles
- God beyond Us, God with Us, God within us

Each expression—describes God and people of different experiences of faith hold on to one or more of these notions so that they relate to God—the best way that is possible for them as individuals.

The reality is that we as humans cannot fully understand God.- God is bigger than we can ever imagine but that is good. This means that God's love for us is bigger than anything that goes wrong in our lives or in the world. Yet not all of us can relate to words sometimes putting words and symbols together helps us to see the 3 in 1.

- Ontario trillium
- Red blue and yellow \*primary colours
- Water in 3 forms- liquid, solid, gas
- Three phases of a plant- seed, plant, fruit
- The elements of creation – earth, sea and sky

Many Christians today move from one image/ person of God to another based upon where we are in faith and what we are thinking about and reflecting upon and what is happening to us emotionally, physically, or mentally. We often do this quickly without deeper thought. For if I were to ask you to think about God's creation—the images in your mind could be anything from an ant to a mountain or a zebra. It could also be a starry sky, a lake and trees or a field whose crops are beginning to grow and blow gently in the breeze.

When we reflect upon the Son of God—Jesus—we see a human man who lived and dressed in a certain era of earth's history. We might imagine him sitting with children, or at the table with his friends, or even on the cross. We might even see him barbecuing fish on the shore after his resurrection and eating with his disciples. These images come because of our experience of hearing, knowing and remembering Jesus' story as he lived and taught on earth.

But when we say that the Spirit of God comes upon those who are open in heart and mind- images fail us because what we might see is the result of having received the spirit within- overflow of tears, inner peace, joy that is complete and even movement and speeches and a calm that is difficult to articulate. We cannot see Spirit—but what the Spirit does. Just like we can only see what wind does to trees as it passes by. But the Spirit is different because it moves in us and because of our willingness to hold on to it and let it lead us. For the Spirit is also causing us to slow down and let God reveal himself to people in different ways than these. It could be through a book ,a story and an individual whose calming presence stirs in us a sense

of peace and understanding. It is also possible that another person whose spirit is filled with hope may talk about their experiences as well.

In the closing verse of Paul's second letter to the Corinthians he offers to them a blessing which we often share on a regular basis. May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all. In this blessing Paul tells us about God—grace of Jesus, love of God and fellowship of Spirit and how all offer strength and guidance no matter we go and what we do.

It is in Jesus' commissioning to his followers that they and we learn our purpose as Christians—to go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. We are to teach them to obey everything Jesus commanded his disciples. We are also not to be afraid.

Baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. This is known as the Trinitarian formula and is accepted declaration of who we are as Christians and how we are recognized by other churches/ denominations.

The World Council of Churches first gathered in 1948 and declared that this council is a fellowship of churches which accepts "our Lord Jesus Christ as God and Saviour. However, after so many questions and requests for a clearer definition of the **Trinitarian** a re-formulation was adopted in 1961. This statement still stands: "a fellowship of churches which confess the Lord Jesus Christ as God and Saviour according to the scriptures, and therefore seek to fulfill together their common calling to the glory of the one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit." The United church of Canada is one of 110 denominations from around the world who are a part of this movement whose goal is Christian unity.

As a church, "knowing God as creator and father, as Redeemer in Christ and as Holy Spirit working in us, we confess our faith in the Holy Trinity. So we acknowledge and worship one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. (2.4.4- A Statement of Faith 1940)

Who is God to you? Let us continue to seek answers to this question as we remember Paul's blessing to us all:

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