

SERMON FOR TRINITY SUNDAY

May 30, 2021

Collect: Almighty and everlasting God, you have given to us your servants grace, by the confession of a true faith, to acknowledge the glory of the eternal Trinity, and in the power of your divine Majesty to worship the Unity: Keep us steadfast in the truth and worship, and bring us at last to see you in your one and eternal glory, O Father; who with the Son and the Holy Spirit live and reign, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

The Lessons: Old Testament: Isaiah 6:1-8

Psalm: 29

Epistle: Romans 8:12-17

Gospel: John 3:1-17

The sermon: Today is the last Sunday of Pentecost and is known as Trinity Sunday. Trinity Sunday describes the uniqueness of God; He is three in one. He is God the Creator, the Father. He is also the Son and he is also the Holy Spirit.

The collect tells us that you have given us grace to know and acknowledge the glory of the eternal Trinity and through your divine Majesty the power to worship its Unity.

For some it is difficult to understand the Trinity. We accept readily that God is the Creator of all that is, everything. The problem comes in believing that he is the Son, Jesus who by the power of the Holy Spirit became incarnate, human, from the Virgin Mary and was made man. Then there is the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, (it is indeed God that gives life). The Holy Spirit comes, is produced by, the Father and the Son.

If this part of sermon is sounding familiar, it should, it comes from the Nicene Creed on page 358 of the Book of Common Prayer.

A simple way to understand how God can be accept as the Trinity, three persons as one, is to look at water. Water, in its original state, is a liquid. Water when frozen can be an ice cube. Water when heated to boiling is steam, which is a gas. Yet whether frozen or heated at any point it can return to that liquid state of water. So, to understand God as the Trinity maybe you can think of God as being like water.

Water will always be wet and flowing and it can be found anywhere. Even on the desert, there can be moisture in the morning, traces of water in the air.

What do we know about the Three Person of the Trinity? We know that God created the world. We know that God creates life and that in the beginning he made man the steward, the caretakes of all he had made. We know that God was pleased with all that he had created in seven days. We also know that God got angry when Adam/man disobeyed him and introduced sin into the world.

Why did God get so angry about the introduction of sin? The Episcopal Catechism, An Outline of the Faith, on page 848 of the Book of Common Prayer (B.C.P.) describes sin as: ***the seeking of our own will instead of the will of God, thus distorting our relationship with God.....***

This says, even today, that man put his wishes, wants, desires above what God had instructed man or wants man to do. In essence it says that man knows more than God and that man can do what he wants.

This so angered God, that he put man out of the Garden of Eden. As man continued to be disobedient God's anger grew. He was disappointed with man and decided to destroy the earth with a flood.

God noticed that there was one man, Noah, who tried with all his might to be obedient to God. Because of Noah, God decided to wash away all on

earth, but to rebuild it with Noah and his family giving man a second chance.

After 40 days of the flood, God dried the lands and because of his compassion made a covenant with Noah, a sacred promise (Genesis 9:8-17) that he would never again destroy the earth with a flood.

God loved the world so much that John 3:16 it tells us that he gave his only Son, that everyone who has faith in him may not die but have eternal life.

We see now that God doesn't want to destroy the world but to save it. So, he sends Jesus into the world.

Jesus, the second part of the Trinity, God now comes into the world, becomes human, man. He came to show God's love. He is to teach and show through his living among man what and how God wants us to live so that man can have a right relationship with God.

Jesus, who is divine, now becomes human. He is baptized in the River Jordan by John the Baptizer. You would think that he didn't need to be cleansed, he was not profane/unclean because he was the Son of God. Yet, he wanted to be baptized, perhaps showing that he was going to change his way of living.

As he came up from under the water, an amazing thing happened. The scripture says the heavens opened. Imagine, the sky has a brightness unlike anything you have ever seen, then from the sky you see the Holy Spirit, in the likeness of a dove, descending and enveloping Jesus. Then you hear the voice of God speaking, "This is my Son of whom I am pleased). Jesus is to start his ministry and spread the Good News that God doesn't want to destroy man but to save him by loving him.

Jesus is born into the Jewish faith and becomes a rabbi, a religious teacher. He observes the traditions of the faith, he observes the religious holidays, he preaches and teaches in the synagogues, in the temple and wherever he is approached.

Jesus begins to attract attention mainly through his healing and curing the sick. He is performing miracles, the blind see, limbs that are crooked or useless are made whole, the Lame can walk . The word spreads and people begin to come to him bringing their sick and listening to what he is teaching.

He has also come to the attention of the Jewish religious authorities. They hear of the miracles, they see the size of his followers growing, they know he is a rabbi, a teacher of the faith. But, they are disturbed because he has caused an uproar at the temple. He has overturned the tables of the money changers, driven out the sellers of animals and accused the temple instead of being a place of prayer now being a den of thieves.

Bear in mind that Jews came from throughout to worship at the temple in Jerusalem. They had to exchange their money into the currency that was accepted at the temple. Traveling long distances it wasn't feasible to bring animals for sacrifice they could be purchase in Jerusalem in the temple courtyard.

Jesus didn't object to this practice, what he objected to was the fact that merchant had become, unfair, greedy, were overcharging, and taking unfair advantage of the people.

This angered the religious authorities and now they wanted to get rid of him. It didn't help that they knew he had raised a man, Lazarus, from the

dead. He was a challenge to life and religion as they practiced it. They had accepted the fact that he was holy and taught from the scriptures. They wanted to know who had given him the authority to heal, cure and raise the dead. Where had he come from? Who was it that had sent him into the world.

The thought that God had sent him and that he was the Son of God was forbidden.

Nicodemus, a religious leader and a member of the Sanhedrin Council had a strong desire to find out who this rabbi from Gallilee really was. He found out where he was staying. Secretly and at night he went to visit Jesus. In his discussion with Jesus, Jesus acknowledged that he, Nicodemus was a great teacher of the Jewish faith but that he didn't understand what Jesus was about. Jesus told him that he would have to change his understanding and teachings about God and his relationship to man.

Nicodemus asked how could that be, he was an old man. To understand this new way would he have to be born again. Jesus of course goes on to explain and convince Nicodemus that these things could only be done by someone who had come down from heaven and had seen the Father.

It is from the discussion with Nicodemus that we get God so Loved the world that he sent his only Son into so that those who believed in him would have eternal life.

Jesus knowing that he would be put to death tried to assure his disciples that they would not be alone and that they should continue his ministry. Jesus told them he would provide an Advocate to them, someone to walk and work alongside them. This Advocate would do for them what Jesus

had done. He would be mentor, teacher and protector. This Advocate would be the Holy Spirit.

A week after his death while the disciples were hiding in the upper room, Jesus appeared to them. He breathed on them and gave them the Holy Spirit. Now they would be able to heal, cast out demons and continue the work of Jesus. On Pentecost the disciples again received the Holy Spirit. This time they were given the gift of speaking in tongues, many different languages so that people throughout the world could hear and understand.

And here we are on Trinity Sunday, hearing and understanding the words of God.

Rev. Lionel Starks