

Trinity Sunday

June 16, 2019

Rev. Ken Wratten at St. Luke's

Proverbs 8:1-4, 22-31

Romans 5:1-5

John 16:12-15 Jesus will send the Advocate. The Spirit is One with the Son.

Today is Trinity Sunday. In the rest of our church year we read scripture for history, stories, or parables about what God DOES in the world; today's lessons focus on WHO GOD IS. God is Spirit, and so the more we can understand the nature of God, the more likely we are to recognize God's presence and activity around us. Christianity is unique in this understanding of a triune God, and it offers us a way to get our heads around the works of our infinite God.

There is an intellectual side to our understanding the nature of God, and there is an experiential side to it.

The intellectual side of understanding 'The Trinity' speaks of humanity's best attempts at understanding the Divine Mystery; the function and the being of God as one Godhead, consisting of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. This three-fold understanding of God is not explicitly stated in scripture, but it has been supported using both Old Testament and New Testament scriptures. The understanding we now have was formed at the early church councils of the 4<sup>th</sup> century.

It was developed primarily by the Cappadocian fathers; John Chrysostom, Basil the Great, Gregory Nazianzus, and Gregory of Nyssa. Their description of God as 'Trinity' was written into the Nicene Creed in 325, and adopted by the whole church at the First Council of Constantinople in 381.

The interrelationship of the separate persons of God is referred to by Jesus in the Gospel of John, chapters 14-17 – but not very clearly... He said that he was going to the Father so that he might send the "Advocate". Then, his disciples will dwell in him, as he dwells in the Father, and the Father dwells in him, and the Father will dwell in them. He is describing a mutual in-dwelling...

One example used by the early church to describe this was to look at the sun, the sun's rays, and the sun's warmth. Another is the flame from three burning sticks, held so that their ends are together; each stick has a flame, but the difference between the flames of one stick and another cannot be seen.

Another is from St. Patrick (373-465 AD), who used a shamrock to explain the Trinity. The one leaf of the shamrock is formed from three leaves: just as in the one God there are three divine beings: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Another illustration is ice, water, and steam: all are the same substance, but existing in three forms.

You get the idea: 1600 years of intellectual work, using familiar sights that convey the concept of three persons contained in the one reality of God.

Now what about the experiential side of the Three-in-one God?

St Paul wrote (Ephesians 4:6) that God is “over us, and in us, and living through us”. I like that description from Paul; a threefold description of where God is.

Above us: in us: and with us. (NLT)

God is above us: Our reading today from Proverbs describes the works of God; creator of the earth, the depths, the mountains and hills, the fields and soil, and the heavens.

Have you ever felt overwhelmed by the gift of your children, or the love of your spouse, or the loyalty of your parents, or the treasure of your home and belongings, or the support of your friends, or the feeling of being held in the arms of God?

God the Father is over us.

God is with us: Have you envisioned Jesus being a close friend, assuring you that you are understood, cared about and loved; that your shortcomings don't matter, because God loves you just as you are; that your faith and belief in Jesus are so important because your belief brings honor and glory to God?

God the Son is with us.

God is in us: God sends us into the world with the power of the Spirit in us.

Have you felt in your life a strong sense of right versus wrong in some situation; a warm comfort in making a hard decision that resulted in real good being done; a ‘warming in the heart’ over a decision to have God take over your life for the day; an inner strength to do something you didn't think you had the strength to do; an overpowering sense of God working in the things going on around you?

God the Holy Spirit is living through us.

God is above you; God is with you; and God is living through you. May your awareness of these dimensions to God's presence and works bring blessing to you;

In the Name of God; Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.