

“Trinity Sunday”

Matthew 28: 16-20

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Alan Greenspan, the former Federal Reserve Chairman gave a number of speeches over the years on the economy and in one speech at the meeting of the Economic Club in New York he prefaced his speech, as economists tend to do, with this comment, “I guess that I should warn you, if I turn out to be particularly clear, you have probably misunderstood what I have said.”

I think that a number of sermons on the Trinity could also make that same claim. A few years ago the DaVinci Code was a popular best seller and one of the characters in the DaVinci Code claimed that Jesus was “voted” to be divine at a council meeting of the early church, where previously everyone just regarded him as a human. Last year I completed my Theology studies on early Christianity and church history and my studies don’t quite unfold the story in quite that way, but the Divinci Code was right about one thing, the early church discussed weighty matters in great council meetings. And one of these discussions was centered not on Jesus’ divinity, but on the nature of the Trinity. The Trinity, as we would speak of it today, is God: The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, or God: The Creator, the Redeemer and sustainer.

The scriptures certainly never describe the Trinity, or even use the label “trinity,” or define what it means in any way. So the early church councils tried to hammer out what this Trinity thing was. They debated many questions about the Trinity, and there were strong “parties” that supported certain views. One party for example thought that any concept of Trinity would need to show that Jesus, the Son, was not comparable to God the Father. But the Nicene party wanted to insist, with a very specific Greek language, that God the Father and God the Son were “like according to substance,” even though this is never clearly stated in the scriptures anywhere. Another debate was over whether Christ was “begotten” or “made” – created by God or existing with God in the beginning in a way different from the creation of human beings. All of these details would eventually be hammered out, and we think there are battles in the church today, well there were certainly disagreements in the early times and sometimes not in a friendly way and not always without labeling each other heretics, and the result, in part, is the Nicene Creed and it is that Trinity which we celebrate today.

Trinity Sunday, the first Sunday after Pentecost, is a time that Popes and Bishops long ago thought it was good and wise to remind the millions of followers and seekers that God is a mystery which is best understood in three ways – As creator or Father, as redeemer or Son, or as sustainer or Holy Spirit. God is one, yet God is three. God is here, yet God is everywhere. God is mighty, yet God is tender. God is just, yet God has mercy. God is spirit, yet God takes on flesh. God is in Christ and Christ is in us, God is Spirit and the Spirit blows where it wills yet the Spirit abides in our hearts. God is one, yet God is three.

The Apostle Paul writes this about God. “Since the creation of the world, God’s invisible qualities, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made.” When we leave worship this morning we may see a blue sky, fields that are greening along with peach orchards and vineyards. And we and give thanks to the power, to the grace and to the beauty that made it all.

I know that you know and understand what I am saying, that’s why you are here because God is good and you want to remind yourselves of that and share that truth and celebrate it before God.

But then there are others, and many of them, who stop just there with the clouds and the trees and while they may get a spiritual message, they do not get the same message, they don’t get the same message of goodness and of the beauty that we do for we know that God is one, yet God is three.

Paul goes on to write “they neither glorify him as God nor give thanks to him, but their thinking becomes futile and their foolish hearts are darkened. Although they claim to be wise they become fools and exchange the glory of this immortal God for images made to look like mortal man and wild animals.”

Last Sunday we celebrated Pentecost Sunday, the festival of the Spirit of God, of the Spirit which is God. We remember the incredible goodness of God, that God should come to us and inhabits us and give us powers and gifts by which we might do his will, by which we might communicate him to others. Many Christians have thought of the incredible power of God and perhaps fewer have thought about God as a spirit that inhabits us, as a force within that can be touched and which can touch us and others around us. Some say this is an age of the spirit and that there is a great awakening happening, that even as people abandon the church and their places of worship, they are reaching out to the power behind these institutions as they long for the divine celestial prophecy.

The spirit of God is the one which guides us and the one which comforts us today and conveys God’s mercy to us. The spirit is the one who listens and speaks to us. It is by the Spirit that our prayer is prayer to God and by the Spirit that our prayers are answered. Truly, God is a mystery my friends, a mystery so big and awesome, yet so holy that our limited minds can never grasp the wholeness of it, but God has placed in us the capacity to appreciate the mystery that God is and allows us to embrace that mystery.

God has revealed himself, not just in the act of creation or in nature and its manifest goodness and beauty. God has revealed himself in Jesus Christ, the one who was born by the Spirit and who worked all of his works by the Spirit and who healed and forgave by the Spirit. In Christ, God reveals himself as the one who loves and the one who does so in tangible and concrete ways. Without this one, without this revelation of God whom we call the Christ, you and I would not have the promises nor would we have the inheritance of heaven to come. Jesus is the one who reveals the way to us, the one who speaks the truth to us and gives us life by his touch and by his word.

We have in God, the three in one and one in three and that is something that is very precious. We have the gospel, the good news of the salvation this is for all mankind. We have the message concerning God's love and his desire to grant wholeness to all of his children.

We have the light that shines into the darkness of human hearts and brings healing, a light that shines into the life of all of those around us.

On Ascension Sunday, we were reminded of Jesus' words, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, The Son, and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you, and lo, I am with you always to the very end of the age." There are probably fewer words in the Scriptures that have had a more profound effect on our common history as men and women of the Christian faith in that simple phrase – "Go out therefore and make disciples of all nations."

On Trinity Sunday, we are called to embrace all that God is and wants to be for us. Instead of trying to pin God down, we need to reorient our focus. The Trinity, in all its mystery is clear in this: Our God is a God who is all about relationships. Our God is not satisfied to be just one thing, one essence or one expression. Our God is not only our Creator, but also one who is willing to come and be with us in human form, to take on all that it means to be a human on earth and God is not only who does those things, but also the one who is willing to dwell within us, to live in our hearts, and so guide our lives right from within the very core of our beings.

This is a God who will seek us out for relationships in any way possible and so desirous is God of being a part of who we are and having us be a part of who God is. Our God is persistent to be let in to our lives. Our God is creative, pervasive, and permeating every part of our existence.

That is the Trinity, even if it's not a very defined definition. Indeed, it seems some of the very best things in the world are the ones we are least able to put into clear words or concise definitions. For all of the writings we have movies and poems and talk about love, it's very hard to define what love is. But that doesn't reduce love's power or our desire to give and receive love in our lives. Love seems to be something you have to simply experience and know and it is the same with God who is Three in One and One in Three. Hard to define, but worth all the conversation.

So instead of worrying so much about what we don't know, what we can't figure out or what we can't label, we are better off if we worried about what is clear to us. In our passage from Matthew, called the Great Commission, Jesus gives us a task: Go and make disciples and make them part of the faith community in the name of this dynamic God who is too great to be pinned down or boxed in. Jesus doesn't tell us to go make scholars or theologians, Jesus calls us to make disciples and "disciples" literally means "students."

That means that we're meant to be learners and students of Jesus and to be a student means that we don't know everything, that we are still learning and that it is OK to wonder and have

questions and need things explained again and make mistakes. We're students of God, and our course of study is one that will last a lifetime as we continue to learn and grow in our faith.

As we go about this task of making and being disciples, we can do it in the very same way in which God chooses to relate to us: always in dynamic relationships. If God is always seeking to be in relationships with us, God is always also seeking for us to be in relationship with others. The solemnity of the Holy Trinity offers the foundation of Christian hope. We are not loved by a distant God, but by one whose Son offered up the very life of God for our sake. The church today lives in the gift of the Spirit from Father and Son, which forms us into sons and daughters of God. This Spirit, which touches all those created in the image and likeness of God and who bear the imprint of the last Adam, is capable of leading people who love the light into ever more profound unity and reconciliation. We grab a hold of this mystery knowing that God loves us and cares for us and that God will allow us to do great things in His name. Amen