

Trinity Sunday May 26, 2024

There is a church calendar out this year that shows the priest all tied up in the cincture, this bit of rope that's used for a belt with church robes, and the caption reads, "Oh, the Rector gets all tied up in knots when he preaches on Trinity Sunday!" And my own father in law warned a couple of weeks ago in his sermon about the difficulty of preaching on the Trinity and that best not to do it. But just because I'm feeling contrary, I'm going to go ahead and do it anyway (and hopefully you'll see the reason why I think it is important as well)!

Prayer: Most merciful and glorious God, as we gather to worship you as Trinity, help us to open our hearts and souls to your love that we might share that love freely with others. This we ask in the name of Jesus our savior and friend. Amen.

Today is set aside as a day to worship explicitly in the name of the Trinity. The prayer we used to open the service speaks of God as both a Trinity and a Unity, that confusing and illogical mathematical notion Christians seem to share. Of course, part of the difficulty is that a full fledged understanding of what it means to talk about God as a Trinity is not really present in the Scriptural writings. At the end of Matthew's gospel with the "Great Commission," Jesus tells the disciples to go out into the world, baptizing people "of all nations in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit," one of the few explicitly Trinitarian formulas in the Christian writings, but not one that gives us much of a sense of why this understanding of God as the Trinity is important, or even more basic, what it really means about God. And the same is true of the readings we have just heard: Isaiah invokes an awesome encounter with God, a God who is accounted three times "Holy," Paul writes in the Letter to the Romans of the spirit of God, God as 'Abba!" And that as heirs of God we are also heirs with Christ, bringing together the elements of the Trinity, but not giving us a sense of any conclusive or coherent meaning here. And finally, we have the delightful story of Jesus' encounter with Nicodemus, a leader in Israel, one who recognizes that Jesus comes from God, and Jesus testifies to Nicodemus and even deeper truth, of the power of the Spirit of God's Love, a deep Love for the world to bring the world into eternal life. Here I believe we are getting closer to what Trinity can mean for us in our understanding of God and why this is important in our faith and for our lives and for the life of the world.

In the dialog, Jesus' divinity is understood by Nicodemus as a power that brings the divine order into the world by the very presence of God. Nicodemus has seen these signs and they point him in the direction of opening his sight to the divine presence with Jesus. It is that very presence that has drawn Nicodemus to Jesus. But Nicodemus is not quite there: remember, he comes to see Jesus by night: he's trying to cover his tracks, to make sure that none of the other religious leaders suspects that he might be hanging around that pretender from Galilee! Jesus understands this, and Jesus goes on to make an even more astounding claim: that we can see the kingdom of God, that we can be in that presence of the reign of God, that God's justice, God's peace, can become visible to us. What is necessary is being born in the spirit, having the Spirit of God reorient our lives, open up our souls, redirect our vision, that we can see what God shows us, that we can know of this presence of God in our lives.

Nicodemus, as reluctant as he is, Nicodemus seeks the relationship with Jesus, to be lifted into that presence of God, indeed, once he begins to really see, he seeks that relationship in the spirit of God's love. But even more strongly than Nicodemus seeking that relationship with God, God has already opened the door for this relationship by sending Jesus to Nicodemus: this is the God who seeks a loving relationship with all of God's creation, seeking to draw all of creation into a harmonious chorus of equity and peace, seeking to bring out the best in all that is, all that ever will be. This yearning for relationship, this longing to bring into being deeper and sweeter harmonies, this is so deep that it is the very being of God, the very essence of the divine: God is that relationship, one who is, a begotten word of Love and a Spirit of Love going forth, going forth into all creation to embrace it all in Love. That, that my friends, is the reason for pause and contemplate this Trinity Sunday: the God who loves us is the God who in God's own self is in this constantly loving relationship, the God whose very

being is a loving relationship. As Jesus then teaches Nicodemus, God seeks us out in this love, calls us into this relationship, God loves us and urges us in that love to love others, to live fully in God's love by loving our neighbors as ourselves. And as the Gospel lesson concludes, "God so loves the world that gives God's own self, God's begotten word of Love" to the world for the life and blessing of all creation.

Yes, yes this is a deep truth, a deep aspect of our faith, but it is not rocket science: it is just as near to us as that presence of God that Nicodemus found. This call of God, to live in the depth of this divine relationship is given to us each day and every day. Often, all too often, we might be distracted or blind to that call, but God's call persists, nevertheless. Isaiah was well aware of this call, but he sought to avoid it by claiming to be unworthy of taking up God's call. But God is not having it: In God's loving call Isaiah is purified, Isaiah is strengthened and Isaiah is given what he needs to carry out God's mission of love, and finally, finally strengthened in that relationship Isaiah is able to answer the call, to say unequivocally, "Here am I; send me!" And we see that same transformation in Nicodemus' life as well. After the crucifixion, after Jesus is abandoned by all, left by all friends and family, Nicodemus joins Joseph of Arimathea to take the body of Jesus for burial, to anoint Jesus' body in preparation, now no longer coming to Jesus is secret, but openly at his time when all others have fled, that Spirit of Love gives Nicodemus the courage to follow in Jesus' Way of Love when all others have abandoned Jesus.

And so this day, this day we too celebrate this divine relationship of love at the very center of the cosmos, at the depth of all that is, and like both Isaiah and Nicodemus, we too seek to be in the very presence of God that the spirit of Love will enable us to love our neighbors just as deeply as we are love, that we are able to live in that spirit of Love. This day, we gather once more around this Altar in the presence of Jesus, not like Nicodemus coming here in the dead of night, but on this Spring morning to live fully in that love. May God continue to bless us in this special relationship, knowing of God's loving nature that call forth love in our lives. Thanks be to God for this amazing grace and thanks be to Christ for opening up our lives to the Spirit of Love. Amen.