

## Sunday, May 27, 2018

### The Holy Trinity

#### Introduction

When we say God is the triune God, we are saying something about who God is beyond, before, and after the universe: that there is community within God. Our experience of this is reflected in Paul's words today. When we pray to God as Jesus prayed to his Abba (an everyday, intimate parental address), the Spirit prays within us, creating between us and God the same relationship Jesus has with the one who sent him.

#### Readings and Psalm

- [Isaiah 6:1-8](#) *Isaiah's vision and call*
- [Psalm 29](#) *Worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness. (Ps. 29:2)*
- [Romans 8:12-17](#) *Living by the Spirit*
- [John 3:1-17](#) *Entering the reign of God through water and the Spirit*

Today is Trinity Sunday and it is the one Sunday of the church year that often leaves us baffled and confused as we try to make this Sunday about math – how one plus one equals three, or how three-in-one works. Today is not actually about explaining God as the Trinity, but rather, is about praying to and worshipping with God; the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Let's review how we arrive here at Trinity Sunday, for just a moment.

In our time together since Epiphany, we have celebrated the manifestation of God in Christ, we have spent time in Lent journeying with Christ on the way to the cross, we have experienced the highs and lows of Holy Week, and the celebration of resurrection on Easter Sunday. We have read stories of Jesus' appearances and his last appearance as he ascended, to fulfill all that the prophets had said, and as he had foretold in his time with the disciples. Then last Sunday, we celebrated the gift of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost Sunday.

Our worship time throughout these past few months has focused on OUR journey as well. We gathered on Ash Wednesday to remember that we are God's children, marked with the cross of ashes, and that we have been created by God and will remain claimed, both in this, life and beyond. We journeyed through Lent, in a time of waiting and preparation, then we gloriously worshipped as Jesus entered the city with a parade and a royal welcome on Palm Sunday. Then we ate the Last Supper with Jesus and his disciples on Maundy Thursday, and wept at the foot of the cross on Good Friday. We joined together in worship and pray on Easter Saturday to observe the time in-between; the time of uncertainty, fear, and grief. Then Easter Sunday, with all its pomp and circumstance, brings us light and good news, for the tomb is empty and Jesus has been resurrected. We rejoiced in this news, for it means Jesus is truly God's Son.

Then through the weeks of the Easter season we gathered to hear God's Word, and the instructions from Jesus and the apostle Paul on how we are created, called, and gifted to live in response to the amazing gift from God that comes to us through the life, death, and resurrection of God's Son; Jesus. Then Ascension – Jesus has done all he will do – shared God's message of love, instructed us in how to live a life of love, showed us how to live a life of love –sacrificing all we have for others just as he did on the cross. The lesson in all of this is that **we are forgiven people of Christ, we are filled with grace** and we are Jesus' light in this **world called to continue God's work**. We do not do this work alone; Jesus made certain of that with the gift of the Holy Spirit that we just celebrated last week.

This journey, since Epiphany, now becomes the foundation for the season that lies ahead of us in which we will praise and honor "Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever." This deserves an **AMEN!**

AND NOW – how do we live, honor, and use our gifts in a life on this earth that does all that; that lives up to all that we have been given in this journey since Epiphany?

Earlier this week a group of leaders, council members, rostered ministers, and staff from the three ELCA congregations that participated in our Sunday morning Lenten experiment, met with the Bishop and an assistant of Southern Ohio Synod to essentially talk about this question. We spent time reviewing our journey of the last eighteen months since the Bishop had gathered members of numerous ELCA congregations together to "Imagine the Possibilities". Our smaller group met this week to answer the questions; why, how, and what is God calling us to be and do. How can all that we have imagined and all that God has imagined for us come into reality? How will we live, honor, and use our gifts to do God's Work that fully celebrates and praises all that God has given us?

To answer these questions we must look beyond ourselves, beyond today, beyond yesterday. We must take the example God has given us in Jesus, and move beyond our own desires, wants, and selfishness. Jesus gave up everything for us so that we are forgiven, graced-filled people of God, and then called on us to share it all, to live a life of light, love, grace, and forgiveness in this world. Just like the balloon from last Sunday – we are filled-up with the Holy Spirit, given to us in God's name through the life, death, and resurrection of the Son – not so that we can be comfortable, but so we can blow through this world **giving it all away**.

This is living a life of stewardship. This is living a life honoring the gifts, talents, passions and all the treasures we have been given. This is living a life that does not hoard what God has given us, or even hide it, because this is not the example that God has given to us through Jesus. The example we have, the call we have, calls us to share, and give it ALL away. This is about being a church together, about serving together, about being better together, about being a community guided by God, through God's Son with the Holy Spirit.

This is about being the church of tomorrow because what would this world be like if the disciples had hoarded their gifts and didn't share the love, grace, and forgiveness that they were given? There would be **no** church that serves God by loving our neighbors as ourselves. If we do not share the message, and be the church of tomorrow, there will be NO church for

our children and grandchildren, there will be NO church that honors and shares all that we have been through, since the day of Epiphany, with God's world tomorrow.

The church of tomorrow is not about those of us gathered here today – it is about those yet to come. It is about those that God is gathering together, it is about those that we are created, called, and gifted to serve. The church of the future is God's church, and about answering God's call, as the apostle Paul writes in Romans; *<sup>8</sup>Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" And I said, "Here am I; send me!"*

It is about leaving a legacy, for we are not only God's children, but also heirs, and not just heirs, but co-heirs with Christ, as Lutheran Pastor and author Rev. Dr. David Lose writes in his commentary on these verses from Paul's letter to the Romans. Co-heirs with Christ means we are equal inheritors of ALL that God has given WITH Christ, God's only begotten Son. Co-heirs means rather than being afraid of the future, of what people may think of us, of our status, of our standing with God – we are instead invited to imagine a life of courage, living life as though we truly believe in the grace, love, and forgiveness we have been freely given through the Trinity, the Three-In-One, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

This life lived as co-heirs frees us to live with the full-measure of God's blessings and riches AND we have been created, called, and gifted to share it ALL. This is the life of courage that Paul calls us to imagine. The same life Jesus discussed with Nicodemus, when he asked him to imagine the opportunity we have been given through our life in the Spirit, as God's children who are so precious in God's sight that God gave God's Son to die for us. This is all about relationships – God's relationship with all that God created, God's relationship with Jesus and Jesus' relationship with his Father and with the Holy Spirit, which brings us into right relationship with God the Father, Jesus the Son, and the Holy Spirit. The Trinity is about the **POWER OF LOVE**. How many of you are now thinking of the Huey Lewis song? In case you are too young - some of the lyrics go like this; *But you know what to do, When it gets hold of you, And with a little help from above, You feel the power of love, You feel the power of love. Can you feel it?*

So what does it mean for all of us to live knowing that we are God's infinite "plus one", that we have the power of God's love through our relationship with God the Father, through Jesus Christ the Son, and gifted with the Holy Spirit? What does it mean for us to live knowing that we are God's beloved children, adopted and chosen, and named co-heirs with Christ?

It means we must live a life of courage, knowing that we are never forgotten, that we are always forgiven, and that we have been created, called, and gifted to share the Good News with others, to love our neighbor, and that we must be about leaving a legacy for those yet to come, for those neighbors that do not yet know this love, for the generations to follow so that they can gather in community to worship, praise, pray, serve, continuing God's mission and living out Jesus' ministry. It means that those generations after us will be able to carry on the call to love and serve others, being the light of Jesus and God's hands in the world for all the tomorrows that are to come.

For us, gathered together today, in this place and in others just like it, it means imagining the possibilities, allowing the Spirit to guide us to the possibilities that are beyond our imaginations, and then acting upon it. It means following the example we have been given in Jesus, and the disciples and apostles, and all the generations that have come before us that lived lives of courage, risk, and sacrifice that have brought us to this time and place. It means we can actively live with that same courage, take the risk, and make the sacrifice so that generations to come will have the opportunity to be excited about moving to a new classroom on Sunday mornings next Fall, and all of the Falls to come, so that our youth will have a church community that will be meaningful and relevant when they have children to bring to church, and so that our neighbors will be served the love of God through the hands of our young people. It means we are living a life in response to all that we have been given through God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, living as good stewards of God's creation.