

Trinity Sunday 4 June 2023

Matthew 28:16-end

The Commissioning of the Disciples

¹⁶ Now the **eleven disciples** (community) went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. ¹⁷ When they saw him, they **worshipped** (worship) him; but some doubted. ¹⁸ And Jesus came and said to them, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹ **Go** (mission) therefore and **make disciples** (discipleship) of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.'

Sermon. Called by the Trinity.

Since the beginning of the church year in Advent we have heard and hopefully experienced God as Trinity in our story of salvation/redemption. Jesus, the Word of God, God with skin on, whom we call God's Son – prays to God whom he and we call "Father": "our Father in heaven". Jesus is "one" with "the Father," (John 10:30) "If you have seen me, you have seen the Father," (John 14:6-9). As Jesus prepared to leave this earth, he promised to not leave us alone. We will be left with "God's Spirit," the Spirit of the Father and the Son... His (Jesus') presence in his absence... who will continue to lead us, fill us and empower us... make God very present to us.

We see the working of God as Trinity in the story of creation and redemption... and in our liturgy we invoke the Trinity... also when we baptise, pray (to the Father, by the power of the Spirit, in the name of Jesus – or the Grace), greet, anoint and bless, we do so in the name of Father, Son & Holy Spirit.

Saint Augustine of Hippo, the African bishop of the early 5th century, was a remarkable philosopher and theologian with a phenomenal mind and we have had great fun looking at some of his quotes at the Wednesday Life Group. Augustine spent many years writing about God as a Trinity of Persons, a mystery that consumed his attention but also a mystery that both challenged and eluded his understanding.

The story goes, he was walking by the seaside one day, meditating on the Trinity, how God could be One essence, and yet, at the same time, three Persons. He came upon a little child. The child had dug a small hole in the sand, and with a seashell was scooping water from the ocean into the hole. Augustine watched him for a little while and finally asked the child what he was doing. The child answered that he wanted to scoop all the water from the sea and pour it into the hole in the sand. Augustine felt compelled to correct the child. "That is impossible," Augustine said. "The sea is too large and the hole is too small." And now it was this child who was compelled to correct Augustine. The child said, "That is true, but I will sooner draw all the water from the sea and empty it into this hole than you will succeed in penetrating the mystery of the Holy Trinity with your limited understanding." Augustine turned away in amazement, and when he looked back, the child had disappeared. Augustine had been put in his place, a place of recognition that he, too, was a child... a child of God, a God whom he would mysteriously experience but never fully comprehend.

Who can understand the mind of God? (Isaiah 55:8). I was drawn back to the Emmaus Road. God is not just a subject to discuss... who can understand God... and the mind of God? God is a person to be encountered and experienced. And it is in baptism that we encounter and experience God as Trinity, as relationship... as we are immersed... baptised... into God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Baptised/immersed into our relational God.

Invited into relationship with God – person to person

We are his children called into relationship with our creator God. As a child is wholly dependent upon their parent so we are wholly dependent upon God. As a child cwtches in to their parent for comfort, love and safety so we cwtch into our God.

God desires to be in personal relationship with us, a relationship not as a distant God. God desires to love us **as God loves God... within the persons of the Trinity**. WOW. Read that again... God desires to love us **as God loves God**. That is what our baptism and our relationship with God is all about. God coming to live not just beyond us, or around us, but within us... to love us as God loves God. Drawn into this community of love transforms us, leads us, guides us, renews us, empowers us etc...

This love and this amazing relationship invitation eludes our understanding... as is the case with many love relationships we cannot comprehend the love. I cannot understand why my wife Kathy loves me, but I know she does and I experience it. So it is with God, we encounter the love but cannot comprehend it. And in and with God there is always more and more love... as the wedding at Cana reminds us (John 2).

A Relationship and Community we're invited into...

The best the Church has been able to describe this mysterious experience is to speak of God as One, yet three Persons, a Trinity... a community, a dance. A community and dance we are invited into. We are the fourth person in the circle. We all are... and we belong in him (Ps 100:3 and Romans 14:8).

A relationship and community that extends to others...

Knowing, encountering and experiencing God as a community of persons makes a profound difference, not only in how we as individuals belong to God, but also how we belong to one another. We are distinct persons, all of us, and yet our essence is the same. We are all made in the image of God. We all need water and food, shelter and rest, love and safety, education and encouragement, health and hope to be alive and thrive. We are all so much the same.

We will hear geneticists tells us that we all are almost, almost identical. And yet the slight differences evident amongst humanity seem almost infinite. We are reminded each day how interdependent we are, yet how related we are and must be to one another, how much we need one another. As human beings and most certainly as the church **we are created to live a shared life**. All of us are distinct persons, and yet we must live in relationship with one another, because this is the essence of how we have created: to live in a community of love.

God as Trinity reminds us that we *belong* to one another. We *need* to belong to one another. We are complete and whole only as we belong to one another, all of us different persons who belong to the One God of all creation.

It is so terribly tragic and unjust, that some people do not know that they belong; even within the church... and that there are numerous philosophies and attitudes that demonise and divide, that do not celebrate difference and uniqueness but use it as a reason to hate.

A father of 3 once said, "as a father, you are only as happy as your least happy child." We are family, the human family. The suffering, the injustice, the inhumanity we witness around us wounds us all to our core because we belong to one another, all of us made in the image of God, who invites us into relationship. We can only be as happy as the most downtrodden among us are happy.

The church is, or should be, a relational and communal sign of what God intends for the whole of humanity.

Finally, the Gospel gives us a shape for our life together as church...

Community... the 11. Jesus calls us into relationship with him, together with Father and Son... and one another.

Worship... they worshipped Jesus. Jesus calls us into union where we worship and adore in the love of our Trinitarian God.

Discipleship... teaching & baptising. Jesus teaches us the way, the truth and the life of God.

Mission... GO. Most of the world will not know or value that today is Trinity Sunday. We have both the power and responsibility and called from Christ to communicate and live out and extend the virtue of relationship, uniqueness of every person, belonging in God for all.