

Trinity Sunday sermon, 4th June 2023, Cathedral

Isaiah 40:12-17, 27-end

Who has measured the waters of the sea^[a] in the hollow of his hand
and marked off the heavens with a span,
enclosed the dust of the earth in a measure
and weighed the mountains in scales
and the hills in a balance?

13 Who has directed the spirit of the LORD
or as his counselor has instructed him?

14 Whom did he consult for his enlightenment,
and who taught him the path of justice?

[[Who taught him knowledge
and showed him the way of understanding?

15 Even the nations are like a drop from a bucket
and are accounted as dust on the scales;
see, he takes up the isles like fine dust.

16 Lebanon would not provide fuel enough,
nor are its animals enough for a burnt offering.]]^[f]

17 All the nations are as nothing before him;
they are accounted by him as less than nothing and emptiness.

Why do you say, O Jacob,
and assert, O Israel,

“My way is hidden from the LORD,
and my right is disregarded by my God”?

28 Have you not known? Have you not heard?

The LORD is the everlasting God,
the Creator of the ends of the earth.

He does not faint or grow weary;
his understanding is unsearchable.

29 He gives power to the faint
and strengthens the powerless.

30 Even youths will faint and be weary,
and the young will fall exhausted,

31 but those who wait for the LORD shall renew their strength;
they shall mount up with wings like eagles;

they shall run and not be weary;
they shall walk and not faint.

Matt 28:16-end

The Commissioning of the Disciples

16 Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. 17 When they saw him, they worshiped him, but they doubted. 18 And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19 Go therefore and make disciples 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.

PRAY (alternative Collect for Trinity)

Holy God, faithful and unchanging: enlarge our minds with the knowledge of your truth and draw us more deeply into the mystery of your love, that we may truly worship you-

Father, Son, and Holy Spirit-one God, now and for ever.

Stretching our minds

During Lockdown, I listened to a real mix of services and prayers, as more and more Churches started to reach out over the internet in new ways.

I heard this prayer, I think, from Canterbury Cathedral, and it struck such a chord that I wrote it down. It's part of a Jewish Daily Prayer, and it helped me consider, in a difficult time, my own relationship with God...and it's remained stuck on my kitchen wall. The Isaiah reading today reminded me of the words:

"God, how can we know you? Where can we find you? You are as close to us as breathing, yet you are farther than the furthest star....You are as mysterious as the vast solitudes of night, yet as familiar to us as the light of the sun"

It is an invitation to enlarge our minds! To see the miracle of the extremes of our relationship with God, but **not to get stuck at** one end of the spectrum.....yes...He is Almighty God...the Father, the Creator of all, as mysterious as the vast solitudes of night.

BUT the same God **wants** to be close to us..He sent us Jesus who prayed earnestly to the Father that we believers would become one with Him and the Father (John 17).... and Jesus asked the Father to send us the Holy Spirit Gift, sealing and uniting us in this relationship.

Trying to describe this relationship is going to be beyond words.....certainly beyond MY words!

- Sometimes, we could forget the God who is calling us close....fearing He is out of reach...Lord, draw us closer to You.
- Sometimes, we might forget the majesty of God, and focus in on the provider of our needs ...Lord help us to worship you in Spirit and in Truth.
- Sometimes, we might think we know all there is to know of this relationship, and that it needs no further attention... Lord, forgive our indifference.

Today, as you know, it is Trinity Sunday ... but if you are a feeling tired or have difficult decisions to make or you're concerned about your own health or maybe the health of a friend or relative...numerous possibilities of challenges...you probably aren't too worried about how the church came to the doctrine of God in Three persons.....you just need to know God hears you/cares/will make a difference!

Instead of dreading the next few minutes as a tough boring theological sermon...please... spend a while thinking of the Trinity as a beautiful, mind blowing and transforming INVITATION!! Which does make a difference to our life here...but we might need a bit of space to remind ourselves just what the Invitation is!

A favourite illustration of mine was quoted to me as I grappled with questions aged 12! You don't need to understand everything about electricity to enjoy the benefits of electricity...lack of knowledge doesn't stop us reaching out to press on a switch!

Little bit of background...

The Trinity as a word does not exist as such in the Bible, but over many years, the early church gathered together what we learn from the Bible, very much including the Words of Jesus and recorded events in His life, and put it together to form the outline of a Doctrine to help us understand The MYSTERY of God as Father, Son and Spirit....and most people freely admit...we cannot really try to explain something we can only grasp a fraction of!! But we try...and it was necessary for some to grapple with the concept, to try to expel some heresies.

How can we truly begin to explain the God who created far far beyond our understanding....think of those words from Isaiah...

think of those images we received from the Hubble Space telescope...

and yet, this is our God, who we learn wants to be as close to us as our breath...understands us completely...offers us rest when life is tough...just wants to draw us into the relationship of the Trinity. And in turn, wants us to share the Life we find in the Trinity, with others, so they too can be drawn in. Last week, at Pentecost, we traced the presence and work of the Holy Spirit through the Bible, right from the moments of creation...lifegiving breath breathed into the dark chaos...bringing beauty and order...through the prophets and eventually...given to all who would receive! And we saw that the action of the Spirit is always about creativity, renewal and refreshing of relationships...it's empowering...it's life-giving.

Throughout Jesus' time on earth, he made reference to himself, Jesus, as the Son, being WITH the Father, "before the world existed" (John 17:5) and yet... it was obvious they were separate persons...Jesus took plenty of time out to **pray TO the Father**...and assured his disciples that he was doing (John5:19) ONLY what he **saw** The Father doing...

And yet... Jesus made it quite clear He IS God...through his life of healings, forgiving sins, deliverances and through His references to himself as being the long promised Messiah-the Light of the World-the Bread of Life, The Way, the Truth and the Life...the Resurrection...all those "I am" statements.

Look at the Gospel reading again: though the disciples tussled with all this...in spite of doubts...they WORSHIPPED Jesus. Jewish followers knew that though they declared in their prayers, "God is ONE"...Here was God in their midst-Jesus.

You can't have a sermon on the Trinity without a reference to the most notable event where the three persons of God are seen together, but separately, in the depiction of Jesus' Baptism....

The Spirit descends on the Son, in the form of a dove, as the Father's voice declares his joy at the Baptism of Jesus...."This is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased".

And then, we come to **our part**.

In the Gospel reading today, following the Resurrection...WE are commissioned to MAKE DISCIPLES, and baptise them...in the name of the Father, of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Imagine what we would miss out on, if we were **not** drawn into the **fullness** of this relationship...if we only were baptised into just one part of the relationship...

Whenever we encounter the 3 persons interacting with each other, it is always with such love and care and respect...working together...honouring each other, and this is the relationship modelled by them, for us....

When we are told that God IS Love...how could He demonstrate love in isolation...

Love can only be shown in relationship... so hard as it might be to grapple with...RELATIONSHIP is surely what we would be expecting from our God!

BUT it is not an **exclusive** club...a relationship from which we are excluded....

Every step of the way, the whole purpose of God, is to reach out to us, and to draw us INTO Himself...

And in the words of the West End musical...Love, love changes everything....

It can change our perception of God and His love for us...it can change our World view...and when relationships are touched by God, surprising things happen!

We know in our heads that this relationship with God is possible through the work of Jesus on the cross and then through the power of the resurrection...followed by the awe-filling gift of the Spirit...

But this is so much more than a “Head Knowledge thing...”

Open your heart, your mind, your spirit to go on being renewed and let your memory be refreshed at just WHO offers this relationship...WHO is longing to share more of themselves with YOU...longing to share Gifts...and all it could mean for you....and the difference you can make, moving through your life, with ALL THAT BACK UP!!!

Keep on saying yes in prayer, to being renewed and refreshed in that relationship

Don't underestimate what it means...

As we move through this new period of learning and consolidating in the Church year, the season of ORDINARY TIME....allow God to let it be anything but ordinary...and watch for His life affecting your life!

As we move to the Eucharist...

We remember...we worship...we give thanks...and we receive...

Amen