

Trinity

31 5 15

Almighty and everlasting God,
you have given us your servants grace
by the confession of a true faith,
to acknowledge the glory of the eternal Trinity,
and in the power of the divine majesty to worship the Unity:
keep us steadfast in this faith,
that we may evermore be defended from all adversities;
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,
who is alive and reigns with you
in the unity of the Holy Spirit
one God, now and for ever.

Our text may be found in today's reading from the prophet, Isaiah (6 v3)

'Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts
the whole earth is full of his glory'

Last week, at Pentecost, we looked at God the Holy Spirit. Two weeks ago, on the Sunday after the Ascension, we looked at God the Son ascending into heaven to sit in glory at the right hand of God the Father. Today, on Trinity Sunday, let us once again try to think about God as Trinity, let's try to get our head round the concept that God is One and Three at one and the same time.

The great gift of Judaism is the insight into the nature and character of God: that he is one God, wholly holy as Isaiah's vision of him proclaims him to be in the superlative song of praise that the seraphim sing around God enthroned. He is a great God, a good God, a loving God who has entered into a covenant relationship with his Chosen People Israel.

The great gift of Christianity is the insight that the one God that the Jews revere and worship is in fact one God in three persons: that God is God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. We all know as much from our baptism in the triple name of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. We all know as much from our confirmation when we personally reaffirmed our faith in God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. We all know as much from the many times we've sat in church and repeated the Nicene or the Apostles Creed or perhaps, in the old days on Trinity Sunday, we might have even recited a third creed that the church endorses: the Athanasian Creed.

The problem in logic is how anything can be at one and the same time both three and one. And, of course, in logic the answer must necessarily be it can't. Various neat images have been used to try to explain how we might understand the impossible. St Patrick cited a shamrock – a three-leafed clover. From science: H₂O – water as solid (ice), liquid (water), gas (steam). From maths: two sums in parallel: $1+1+1 = 3$; $1 \times 1 \times 1 = 1$. From a wedding: $1+1$ can produce a 3rd – not their child, the fruit of their union, but their union itself, the combined person the 2 become because of the blessing of their intimate relationship.

Of course, no matter how much you might like an illustration, none can ultimately reflect what is impossibly unique – Oneness and Threeness at one and the same time. But just because you and I, we together, in logic can't get our heads round the true nature of God, that doesn't mean that it is not a true statement of our faith. In pragmatic terms, we encounter God the Father each time, inspired by God the Holy Spirit, we reflect on God the Son. In spiritual terms, don't we pray to God the Father inspired by God the Holy Spirit in the name of Jesus Christ, the Son of our Father in heaven ?

So let me say that whatever Jehovah Witness may claim to the contrary, whatever Unitarians may affirm, we as Christians hold the Trinity as a Biblical truth affirmed by tradition and confirmed by the teaching of the Church, a doctrine which reflects the true nature of the God who loves us more than we can know.

I have spoken in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit,
Amen.

Preached at the Eucharist

St Bartholomew's, Dinard

31st May, 2015

G: Sermons 32 :Trinity

