

Sermon Trinity Sunday- June 11th

As has been said, today is Trinity Sunday. When I was studying to be a lay reader, this wee book (Trinity 101) was the recommended reading on the Doctrine of the Holy Trinity. The author begins chapter four with these words 'It's been said that more heresy is (accidentally) preached on Trinity Sunday than at any other time of the year.' (So no pressure then!) The reason for that is the doctrine of the Trinity, that is God being one God and three persons, isn't easy to understand. People have tried to explain it using examples from the natural world such as clover, one plant three leaves, an egg which is shell, yolk and white or water which can exist as liquid, steam or ice. But, as was pointed out to us in our seminars, none of these analogies really work. For instance water cannot be gas solid and liquid at the same time. So no analogies from me!

It took the church 381 years to come up with the doctrine of the Trinity in the form of the Nicene creed which we will say today. This creed grew out of people's study of Scripture and of their lived-out experience of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit and the desire to preserve the truths which had been revealed to them.

The doctrine of the Trinity is an attempt to put into words the mystery of the full nature of God, because it is a mystery. It's not after all we who discover God, it's God who seeks us out and reveals himself to us. We may find it difficult to understand how God can be one God and yet three persons but could God be truly God if we could find a formula to sum him up?

We do know however, from today's readings, that Jesus urged his disciples to baptise people in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit and that Paul prayed for the church at Corinth using the words we are so familiar with, 'The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with all of you.'

You see the very first Christians, way before scholars had produced the creeds, had an experience of God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, which was so powerful that they grew from a tiny group of frightened and demoralised men and women into a movement which spread rapidly across the Mediterranean and throughout the world - that same movement of which we are a part today. And it's important that we experience God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit - that we don't sell ourselves short by neglecting any of the persons of the Trinity.

God the Father, maker of heaven and earth, our Father in heaven, whose kingdom we pray for. We're so privileged to live in a place where we're constantly reminded of the awesomeness of Creation. Whether it's the power of the sea in all its varying moods the vast expanses of the beach at Belhaven, the intensity of the sunsets, the intricacy of design revealed in the dappled sunlight in our woods, the glory and majesty of God is revealed and we can only wonder with the psalmist 'What is man that thou art mindful of him?'

And that's where Jesus comes to us, in human form, touching, healing, sharing meals, telling stories, explaining, approachable, accessible, a friend, a brother, someone to whom we can bring our problems. And yet Jesus tells us 'If you have seen me you have seen the father.' So we understand that God wants this intimacy with us. Do you know Jesus as a friend, someone with whom you can just be yourself?

And last week we were reminded that God has sent the Holy Spirit to live in us, to guide us and to empower us. The Holy Spirit, who can give us peace in situations which are fraught and difficult – the Holy Spirit who can stir us to action, prompt us to forgive, help us in our prayers and warm our hearts with the assurance of God's ongoing presence in our lives.

Very soon we will be moving back into our newly refurbished building and I have been pondering about how that relates to the Holy Trinity. Now I was one of those children who never tried to find where my Christmas presents were hidden before December 25th and now, if birthday cards arrive early in the post

they are put aside until the day itself. So it won't surprise you to hear that I have resisted the offer to have a sneak preview of our refurbished church building. However, I have it on good authority that it is looking splendid and I've heard some superlatives being used to describe it.

Let us hope that when we return to that building we and others may sense within its walls the awesomeness and wonder of God, the Father the creator and maker of all. It is my prayer that as people eyes are lifted up to the beautiful vaulted roof so their hearts may be lifted up and voices raised to praise our majestic God.

But that is not enough, because we want people to meet Jesus, God the Son in our church building. We want them to find friendship, hospitality, compassion and healing, We want them to see Jesus in the love we show for one another, in our approachability, in our welcome and love for all, in our willingness to listen and not judge.

And we want them to know the presence of the Holy Spirit in the sincerity and warmth of our worship. We want them to find a safe space where they can encounter the Holy Spirit in the depth of their own hearts, a place where they can be still and know God.

You may have had the experience of entering a church and feeling a deep sense of peace as though the very walls have absorbed the prayers and praise of generations of worshippers. Above all our refurbished building will be a place of prayer, not just public prayers but private prayers offered by people who slip in, in the middle of a busy day, to have a quiet moment. I remember, when I worked in County Hall in Wakefield, I would sometimes walk the short distance to the cathedral in my lunch break to spend some quiet time with God. When our building is open all day, I encourage you to do just that, to make it a point of call in your visit to the High Street and while you are there to say a prayer for all who will enter its walls that they will have an encounter with the living God who is Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Amen