

Trinity Sunday – Year A
Genesis 1:1 – 2:4a
Psalm 8
Matthew 28:16–20

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I love word puzzles. When our daughter Raleigh was at home, she and I used to fight over the page of the Tribune on which the crossword, the Jumble and the cryptoquotes were printed. It's not nearly as much fun now that she's moved out of the house --- because my husband doesn't care about puzzles and just let's me have them. Over my morning coffee I tell myself that I love the process of figuring out the puzzles, not getting everything correct. But that's not true. I only really enjoy the puzzles when I know all the words, and when I crack the code. You see, I feel really good about myself when I see all those boxes filled with ink. Some days it doesn't take much to make me happy.

If I were to approach the concept of the Trinity as a puzzle for me to solve, I would never feel good about myself. Because I don't get it. God as three in one, distinct but not separate. I just don't get it. Robert Farror Capon says that when human beings try to describe God, we are "like a bunch of oysters trying to describe a ballerina." We don't have the equipment to understand God, much less the words to describe God. But our lack of understanding doesn't change the reality of the nature of God. Our poverty of speech doesn't lessen our experience of God as Creator, Redeemer, Sanctifier; our experience of God as the essence of loving community, into which we are invited. Just as we will never comprehend the depths of God's love for us, we will never grasp the richness of God as experienced in the Trinity.

Actually that is very liberating for me. Just as I always like to work with people who are smarter than I am, I don't want to place my faith in a supreme being whom I fully understand. I am overwhelmed by the mystery of God's nature and will not be explaining the concept of the Trinity to you today. However, I invite you to explore with me the significance which this mystery brings to our lives individually and our common life together.

The doctrine of the Trinity is never articulated in the Bible or the earliest church writings and didn't appear as an issue in the Church until 400 years after Jesus resurrection. The best we can do is finding the three persons of the Trinity – the Father, Son and Holy Spirit – mentioned in the same sentence in the text. Our attempts to put any experience of God into words are humbling. The language of the Trinity is language formed in the community's experience of God. The doctrine of the Trinity is the most basic and unique of Christian theologies: God, who has created heaven and earth and you and me, has become one of us and still dwells in us and between us all. God the Father is the source of all; God the Son opens to us the way of eternal life and God the Holy Spirit compels us in love to accept and share this.

In our lessons today we recount God's creation of "everything that is" from the book of Genesis. A few verses before Paul says farewell to the Corinthians he says to them – Do you not realize that Jesus Christ is in you? And in Psalm 8, the writer speaks for each of us as he asks, how does God who created all this also pay attention to any of us? How do we reconcile this transcendent, glorious nature of God with the God who has claimed each of us by name, and who dwells in us?

Our best efforts at understanding God's nature leave us feeling pretty incompetent if we rely on ourselves. But examining the concept of the Trinity can serve as a door for us. The Spirit leads us to walk through that door and recognize God's nature and purpose as we attempt to define our own, because we are made in the image of God.

So what is this image of God we were made in? The image of God, the Triune God, is revealed to us by what God does. And the scriptures are full of God's actions. From the first word in the book of Genesis, we are not introduced to whom God is; we are introduced to what God is doing. "In the beginning God made the heavens and the earth." This is the way God is known: by God's action.. God's actions of creation, redemption and sanctification define God as Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier. Who God is IS what God does. We too are known best by what we do and how we affect the lives of others

God is revealed to us in three persons – diverse yet unified in purpose and substance. The diversity which is the Trinity is bound together in and compelled by the Spirit of love. It is that same Spirit of love which holds us, the people of God, together in unity. That communion of action and essence is the righteousness to which we have been called.

Beholding God's actions or creations helps us to understand ourselves a little better. For we too are whole when what we are is what we do. The Triune God is the embodiment of that wholeness for which we were made. When we accept the promptings of the Holy Spirit to embrace God's love for us and reflect that love to others, God's purpose for us is fulfilled. Our lives are holy and whole. And we become those open doors through which others can walk, so that they too can behold God working in their lives.

As we mature in our theological thinking we are able to see that who God is and who we are can connect in the life of community. That connection, that relationship, is what we celebrate today, Trinity Sunday --- between the Feast of the Pentecost and what is known liturgically as Ordinary Time.

Last Sunday we celebrated that chaotic scene of violent wind, tongues of fire, men who seemed drunk with the Spirit speaking in languages they didn't even know. By the power of the Spirit they all came to understand that God was working through them. The Church was launched. The relationship of God and People was sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit. And as we continue to read in the Acts of the Apostles or in the monthly newsletter at St. Paul's Church, Christ's body, the church is unstoppable.

Since Advent each Sunday morning our gospel lessons have told the stories of Jesus' life among us – his birth, his ministry, his passion, resurrection and ascension – and the completion of story at Pentecost. Now the liturgical clock is reset. Today our theological clock is reset too. We are back to theological basics – who God is, who we are and how we connect. The gospel lessons during the season after Pentecost bring Jesus' teachings into our lives, enabling us to lead whole and holy lives.

I encourage you to listen to the readings this summer, which help us connect the lessons of Jesus Christ and the way we live our common life as the Body of Christ. Pay attention to the gentle lessons offered us by the Spirit of Truth – the truth that we are embraced as God’s own and made whole by the Triune God.

May we always know God’s loving presence among us as Creator, Redeemer and life-giver.

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