

Sunday 7th June – Trinity Sunday

Opening hymn

1 Holy, holy, holy! Lord God Almighty!
Early in the morning our song shall rise to thee.
Holy, holy, holy! Merciful and mighty!
God in three Persons, blessed Trinity!

2 Holy, holy, holy! All the saints adore thee,
casting down their golden crowns around the glassy sea;
cherubim and seraphim falling down before thee,
who wert, and art, and evermore shalt be.

3 Holy, holy, holy! Lord God Almighty!
All thy works shall praise thy name in earth and sky and sea.
Holy, holy, holy! Merciful and mighty!
God in three Persons, blessed Trinity!

Praise - Psalm 8

- 1 O Lord our governor,
how glorious is your name in all the world!
- 2 Your majesty above the heavens is praised
out of the mouths of babes at the breast.
- 3 You have founded a stronghold against your foes,
that you might still the enemy and the avenger.
- 4 When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers,
the moon and the stars that you have ordained,
- 5 What is man, that you should be mindful of him;
the son of man, that you should seek him out?
- 6 You have made him little lower than the angels
and crown him with glory and honour.
- 7 You have given him dominion over the works of your hands
and put all things under his feet,
- 8 All sheep and oxen,
even the wild beasts of the field,
- 9 The birds of the air, the fish of the sea
and whatsoever moves in the paths of the sea.

10 O Lord our governor,
how glorious is your name in all the world!

Collect for Trinity Sunday

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.

Amen

Readings

Isaiah 40:12-17, 27-end

Who has measured the waters 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?
Who has directed the spirit of the Lord,
or as his counsellor has instructed him?
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?
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.
Lebanon would not provide fuel enough,
nor are its animals enough for a burnt-offering.
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 speak, O Israel,
'My way is hidden from the Lord,
and my right is disregarded by my God'?
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.
He gives power to the faint,
and strengthens the powerless.
Even youths will faint and be weary,
and the young will fall exhausted;
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.

2 Corinthians 13:11-end

Finally, brothers and sisters, farewell. Put things in order, listen to my appeal, agree with one another, live in peace; and the God of love and peace will be with you. Greet one another with a holy kiss. All the saints greet you.

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with all of you.

Matthew 28:16-20

Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. When they saw him, they worshipped him; but some doubted. And Jesus came and said to them, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 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, 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 – Rev Nick Ball

Trinity Sunday

So today is Trinity Sunday – traditionally the most difficult Sunday of the year for the preacher. Bishops have got out of preaching on the Holy Trinity by holding their ordinations on Sunday. It's the Sunday when the vicar gets the curate to preach – and then criticizes the sermon. In my last year at theological college the Pastoral Studies tutor wrote to local vicars offering them a student to come and preach on theological education. All the vicars accepted the offer, apart from one who replied indignantly that he had far more important things to preach about on Trinity Sunday. Ans so it was that Lindsay Urwin, who went on to become Bishop of Horsham, and myself were despatched to Witney to preach at the two churches there.

So why is it so difficult to preach on the Holy Trinity? I think it is because we feel we have to explain the doctrine of the Trinity and that is difficult to do in a satisfying way. Explaining the Trinity is a bit like giving people a black and white photograph of a beautiful Painting or turning a great poem into prose. It is changing a divine mystery into maths or philosophy. The Nicene creed which we say on Sunday at the Eucharist is actually very difficult to understand without some understanding of Greek philosophy and if we turn to the Athanasian Creed, which used to be required to be said at Morning Prayer thirteen times a year, we find the word incomprehensible used four times. So rather than trying to explain the Trinity I want to offer three thoughts about God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, all firmly rooted in the scriptures, to aid us in our service this morning. The first is that on Trinity Sunday we are drawn to think especially about the worship of God. Today we heard from Isaiah 40, which includes the words, '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'. In chapter six of Isaiah we read of Isaiah's vision of God in the temple. It's an inspiring passage and it is often read on Trinity Sunday. This is the awesome God, whom we worship, and who is celebrated in Bishop Heber's great hymn, Holy, Holy, Holy, which invites us to worship the same God that Isaiah saw, but seen through the distinctive Christian understanding of God as the Holy Trinity.

Secondly, long before the creeds were written, down the Trinity was at the heart of the Christian proclamation. Paul witnesses to the doctrine of the Trinity in today's second reading when he ends his second letter with the words, 'The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with all of you,' words which have used as a simple Christian prayer ever since. At the end of St. Matthew's Gospel we

heard of the Risen Lord instructing his followers to go and baptise people everywhere in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. So this tells us that people were speaking of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit well before the end of the first century and that the Trinity was proclaimed whenever a new Christian was baptised.

And thirdly the doctrine of the Trinity is about expressing the truths behind a wonderful story. It's about expressing the truths of Salvation history. If we go back to the early pages of Luke's gospel we find the story of the Annunciation in which Mary is promised that the Holy Spirit will overshadow her when she conceives the baby Jesus in her womb. Then in chapter three of his gospel, Luke writes 'Now when all the people were baptised and when Jesus also had been baptised and was praying, the heaven was opened and the Holy Spirit descended upon him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven, 'you are my Son, the Beloved: with you I am well pleased.'

Both these stories at the beginning of Jesus life and again at the beginning of his ministry are clearly Trinitarian in their form and it is the church's reflection on these stories that led Christians to formulate the doctrine of the Trinity.

A trinitarian vision of God was essential to make sense of the story and to spell out its full meaning. And I believe it was also essential in order to make sense of the continuing experience of Christians. First there is our belief that God, the Universal Father, is at the heart of the mystery of the universe Then comes the belief that God is uniquely revealed in Jesus Christ: that is one of the recurring themes of St. John's Gospel. And finally we believe that God is active today, not just in a general way, but in specific ways, whenever the Holy Spirit touches hearts and minds and moves people to action. At the heart of our lives of worship, prayer and discipleship lies a story of God in action.

I want to end with a hymn that I wrote on Easter Monday ten years ago. It is my own attempt to express my faith in God the Holy Trinity. It is called Trinity in Movement because it speaks of the Christian vision of a God who is revealed to us in the wonder of his creation, a God who has given us his decisive revelation in his Son, Jesus Christ, and a God who inspires us day by day in his Holy Spirit. The hymn is a story, a creed and a prayer all rolled into one. I hope it can lead us to the one true God, who is Father, Son and Holy Spirit now and to the ages of ages.

Amen.

O Lord of Light, who shines through all creation,
Who made the stars and planets in their turn,
Who spread the earth and oceans all around us,
The creatures of the land and sea and sky.
You made your children stewards of your bounty,
You gave us wisdom, empathy and skills,
You understood our scheming and our folly,
And sent your Son to live among us and to die.

O Lord of Love, your Son was born at Bethl'em,
Inside a stable, dark and damp and chill.
His parents watched him as he grew in stature,
His teaching and his wondrous power to heal.
He called disciples, ministered to outcasts.
He raised up sinners and the dead to life,
He offered up his life for us as servant,
And died upon the cross, his Father's love to seal.

O Lord of Life, you raised your Son in Glory
And now he sits at your right hand on high.
Your Spirit came upon your church at Pentecost
And comes to each as often as we pray.
So fill us now with gentleness and kindness
And help us work for justice and for peace,
And make us children of your love and healing,
That in eternal life for ever we may stay.

Introduction to the Peace

Peace to you from God our heavenly Father.
Peace from his Son Jesus Christ who is our peace.
Peace from the Holy Spirit, the life-giver.
The peace of the triune God be always with you
and also with you.

Blessing

The Lord bless you and keep you:

Amen.

The Lord make his face to shine upon you,
and be gracious to you:

Amen.

The Lord lift up his countenance upon you
and give you peace:

Amen.

Numbers 6.24-26

The Lord God almighty, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,
the holy and undivided Trinity,
guard you, save you,
and bring you to that heavenly city,
where he lives and reigns for ever and ever.

Amen.

Final hymn – I the Lord of sea and sky

I, the Lord of sea and sky,
I have heard my people cry.
All who dwell in dark and sin
my hand will save.
I, who made the stars of night,
I will make their darkness bright.
Who will bear my light to them?
Whom shall I send?

*Here I am, Lord. Is it I, Lord?
I have heard you calling in the night.
I will go, Lord, if you lead me.
I will hold your people in my heart.*

I, the Lord of snow and rain,
I have borne my people's pain.
I have wept for love of them.
They turn away.
I will break their hearts of stone,
give them hearts for love alone.
I will speak my words to them.
Whom shall I send?

*Here I am, Lord. Is it I, Lord?
I have heard you calling in the night.
I will go, Lord, if you lead me.
I will hold your people in my heart.*

I, the Lord of wind and flame,
I will send the poor and lame.
I will set a feast for them.
My hand will save.
Finest bread I will provide
till their hearts be satisfied.
I will give my life to them.
Whom shall I send?

*Here I am, Lord. Is it I, Lord?
I have heard you calling in the night.
I will go, Lord, if you lead me.
I will hold your people in my heart.*