

Trinity Sunday

Proverbs 8:1-4,22-31

Romans 5:1-5

John 16:12-15

What does Trinity Sunday mean to you? What do we already know about it and how does it impact our lives as Christians today?

Last week as well as celebrating the queen it was also Pentecost, the time when we celebrate that God sent us the Holy Spirit. So far in the churches calendar, that begins on the first Sunday of Advent, we know God as the creator and father of Jesus. We also know that Jesus brings the truth, and makes it present through his coming into the world; the now the spirit has arrived, at what we now call Pentecost. So we know the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

If we pause for a moment and think about God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit, I wonder which one you feel most connected with? Which one you feel you know more about? This will be different for each one of us as we all have different stories to tell. For me personally, I always feel drawn to God as Father and God as Holy Spirit. Growing up without a Father surprisingly doesn't separate me from God the Father, but draws me closer to him. I am always drawn by his faithfulness and gentleness, being reassured by what the bible tells me about the Father God who whispers to his children but shouts at his enemies!

So how are these distinct 'persons' also one God? It's a puzzle that Christian thinkers have tried to make sense of for thousands of years and I'm certain, will do so for many more! I've brought some objects with me this morning that we might use to help us to think about the Trinity – an apple, an egg, a fidget spinner... but more about them later!

I think the first step is to admit that the Trinity is a mystery that is beyond our ability to comprehend. No one metaphor or explanation or hours of theology lectures can capture everything God is. The images we turn to can help our understanding but the explanations will always fall short.

And that's okay! God is bigger than all of us. He can handle it! I'm a mum of 2 girls aged 7 and 14, I am also a wife, I am also attempting to complete my vicar training as well as being a good friend, along with Mike my husband there is a daily grind to keep the house a respectable kind of tidy and generally keep up with life – many times I exclaim – I cannot be ALL things to all people! Thank goodness that God can handle it! Even if we have questions, and we should have questions! They can help our faith strengthen. Even if we don't know all the answers we can still believe and trust His revelation through the bible and in Jesus.

The doctrine of the Trinity tells us that there's ONE GOD who is THREE distinct PERSONS.

If we recall the creed that we will say together in a while then it gives us the structure for the Trinity. It breaks it down for us.

'We believe in ONE God'

1. There's ONE God

Unlike other religions practiced at the time, the Jewish people in the Old and New testaments were monotheist. They believed that only one God existed.

2. God is THREE distinct Persons

Our creed that we declare together explains the 3 distinct 'Persons' of the Trinity. God the Father, Our Lord Jesus Christ, only Son of God and the Holy Spirit (who proceeds from the father and the son.)

The bible reveals God is the Father, God is the Son and God is the Holy Spirit.

It also reveals that each member of the Trinity is distinct from each other. We see all three linked together in scripture. In our readings today in Romans and in our gospel reading the word describes the role of the Father, the son and the Holy spirit as different, yet they intertwine with one another. In the Gospel Jesus says: 'All that belongs to the Father is mine. That is why I said the spirit will receive from me what he will make known to you.' (vs 15)

In our reading in Romans it tells us 'We have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ (vs 1)...God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us.(vs 5)' What a verse and a promise – To have PEACE with God through the interaction of the trinity.

Throughout the bible we see each Person relating and interacting with each other. The Father sends the Son into the world (John 3:6). Jesus often talks about his Father (John 17:5; John 5:19) and prays to Him (John 17:20-26; Matt. 11:25-26; John 12:27-28). The Holy Spirit descends on Jesus as a dove in his baptism (Luke 3:22) and later Jesus promises to send this same Spirit from the Father to his disciples (John 15:26). There seems to be a beautiful flow to it (not like the chaos in my own house!), when one compliments the other and they work in harmony for the good of all creation. So the trinity is also symbol of interdependence and communion, something that we should try to emulate as God's church both in the world and here in Shirley.

3. Each Person is Equal, 100% God and shares the same Divine Nature

The Doctrine of the Trinity also helps us understand a few more important truths about God.

- Each Person of the Trinity is believed to be **completely** God. God isn't One God sliced into three parts like a cake.

- The Father, Son, and Spirit are not three properties of God or just different roles.
- The Trinity isn't Three Gods combined into one.

Each member of the Trinity is different but 100% God. They're all equal. And they all share the same divine Nature.

So how can the objects that I brought today help us to develop our understanding of the Trinity?

The Trinity is like an egg or apple

The Trinity is like an egg. Just as ONE egg has THREE different parts – the shell, the white, the yoke – ONE God has THREE different Persons – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Similarly, can use a similar comparison with an apple. ONE apple has three different parts – the skin, the flesh, and the seed.

So how is this helpful for us today? Well the egg is a great way of helping us understand that one thing can also be 3 distinct things. But how is God different than an egg or an apple? An apple suggests that the members of the Trinity are just three different parts of God. They're not equal and don't share the same nature. The skin is a different material than the seed and the flesh. It's not 100% of the apple and the parts are not equal. Look how much smaller the seed is! These objects are helpful to help us to grapple with the concept of the trinity, but they fall WAY short of the reality of who God is.

So what about this final object – I wonder if you have seen one before? This is called a fidget spinner – they were all the craze a few years ago. Now if we look carefully there are 3 distinct 'arms' which are equal and we could say represent The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. And when we spin it we see that they all spin together and represent one God... However, we know that this is far too simple a way to explain the reality of our God.

Our readings today have shown us how the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are both distinctive yet work through one another. *No object is going to quite work to show what it means for God to be one in his nature as the one true God, yet three in Persons as the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, each fully God. But we should not be surprised at this. After all, the Bible has told us many times that there is no one like the Lord. The objects do help us though to consider the trinity and through our discussions and contemplations we can know more of God.*

So as we have grappled with the Trinity this morning – I wonder what has challenged us in our faith?

Firstly, The Trinity is known as a mystery in Christianity, or something that is never fully knowable. Accepting this mystery is, therefore, an act of faith. It is not easy to do this when the world around us says that there MUST be an answer for everything.

Secondly, The trinity is the symbol of interdependence and communion. A model that we can also follow as followers of Jesus as we meet this morning as one congregation in a

bigger parish. I wonder how are St John's, CTK and St James like the trinity, in terms of a symbol of communion and interdependence? Maybe you can share your answers with me over tea and coffee.

Finally, the trinity shows us what an amazing God we serve. One God, but 3 persons, each part working together and we are invited to share in this interdependence and communion. I think that's amazing and I am so thankful that I am part of the story... Are you?

Amen.