

4th June 2023 – Morning Service

Trinity Sunday

Megan Ashmore

Introduction

Today is Trinity Sunday. Trinity Sunday is where we focus on God being “Triune”, which is a clever word for 3 in 1 or three different “parts” of one whole. It’s mysterious, it’s amazing, it’s challenging. With the help of a few images, readings and reflections I hope that during our worship this morning, we will be able to explore a little more about what this means, but realise also that it’s ok not to completely understand all about God.



I wonder if you know what these are? I expect the children do ...

They are called fidget spinners – meant to keep restless hands busy and out of mischief! As you spin it the three individual parts become a whole. God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit – three in One and One in Three.

This is at the heart of our faith; and so we begin our time of worship by confirming our belief as we say together the Apostle’s Creed:

I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried; he descended to the dead.

On the third day he rose again; he ascended into heaven, he is seated at the right hand of the Father, and he will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

StF 2 – Come, let us sing to the One

1) Come, let us sing to the One,
To the Father of life,
Whose light fills the earth like the sun;
Come, tell of the wonders he's done.
Great is the world he has made,
Are the myst'ries untold,
Is his measureless power of old;
Come, come let us sing to our God.

*Ch) To our God, who is able
To strengthen us in his grace
Beyond all we imagine,
Be all glory and praise,
Be all praise.*

2) Come, let us sing to the One,
To the Saviour of life,
Find the fullness of God in the Son;
Come, tell of the wonders he's done.
Wild is the mercy of Christ,
Is the richness of grace,
Is the unending life we embrace;
Come, come let us sing to our God.

3) Come, let us sing to the One,
To the Spirit of life,
Leading us in the way of the Son;
Come, tell of the wonders he's done.
Strong is the Spirit within,
Is the boldness to speak,
Is the power to run when we're weak;
Come, come let us sing to our God.

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Reflection

Do you remember the story of Cinderella and the part where the ugly sisters are desperately trying to make the glass slipper fit their feet because they want to marry the prince? They were being a bit silly really – they must have known that a dainty slipper like that wouldn’t fit their great big feet. But you know, sometimes we expect God to fit our human-sized minds. And that’s just as silly really.

We say things like, “How can God possibly be able to hear us when we all pray at once?” when what we really mean is that we know humans couldn’t do that, so it must be impossible for God as well. When we do this we are holding out a small human sized shape and expecting God to climb into it! And of course He doesn’t fit, because being God is much bigger, and deeper, and wider than being human. God is so great that He is always going to be full of stuff that is a wonderful mystery to us. But that doesn’t mean that we can’t really know God. Just because God is God and we are human doesn’t mean we can’t be good friends.

The psalmist David, the little shepherd boy, wrote

“I look at the heavens, which you made with your hands. I see the moon and stars, which you created. But why am I important to you? Why do you take care of human beings?”* (Psalm 8 International Children’s Bible and *amended slightly by MA)

The answer - because God loves us. Our God is wonderful and all-knowing. He is the maker of our universe and of all of us, and so He cares for us. He is the one who came as Jesus to show us the way to eternal life and who died because of His love for us. And He is the one who is always with us, living with us as the Holy Spirit to guide and comfort us. How could we ever expect to completely understand a God as amazing as that? Let’s not worry about trying to understand everything but be happy to live as one loved by God. (Based on and All-Age Talk by Susan Sayers Living Stones Book A)

Our next hymn sums this up much better than I have. It reminds us that though God is a great big God, He holds us in the palm of His hands. Please enjoy doing the actions...

StF 61 – Our God is a great big God

Our God is a great big God,	He's higher than a skyscraper,	And He's known me and
Our God is a great big God,	And He's deeper than a submarine.	He's loved me
Our God is a great big God	He's wider than the universe	Since before the world began.
And He holds us in His hands.	And beyond my wildest dreams.	How wonderful to be a part Of God's amazing plan.

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Introduction to reading

The medieval theologian, St Bonaventure, wrote the following about the Trinity:

“The Father is the ultimate source of everything, the loving and self-communicating foundation of all that exists. The Son, His reflection, through whom all things were created, united himself to this earth when he was formed in the womb of Mary. The Spirit, infinite bond of love, is intimately present at the very heart of the universe, inspiring and bringing new pathways. When we contemplate with wonder the universe in all its grandeur and beauty, we must praise the whole Trinity.”

It is no surprise then, that the Old Testament reading set for today is the creation account from Genesis chapter 1.

Reading: Genesis 1:1 – 2:4

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters. And God said, ‘Let there be light,’ and there was light. God saw that the light was good, and he separated the light from the darkness. God called the light ‘day’, and the darkness he called ‘night’. And there was evening, and there was morning – the first day.

And God said, ‘Let there be a vault between the waters to separate water from water.’ So God made the vault and separated the water under the vault from the water above it. And it was so. God called the vault ‘sky’. And there was evening, and there was morning – the second day.

And God said, 'Let the water under the sky be gathered to one place, and let dry ground appear.' And it was so. God called the dry ground 'land', and the gathered waters he called 'seas'. And God saw that it was good. Then God said, 'Let the land produce vegetation: seed-bearing plants and trees on the land that bear fruit with seed in it, according to their various kinds.' And it was so. The land produced vegetation: plants bearing seed according to their kinds and trees bearing fruit with seed in it according to their kinds. And God saw that it was good. And there was evening, and there was morning – the third day.

And God said, 'Let there be lights in the vault of the sky to separate the day from the night, and let them serve as signs to mark sacred times, and days and years, and let them be lights in the vault of the sky to give light on the earth.' And it was so. God made two great lights – the greater light to govern the day and the lesser light to govern the night. He also made the stars. God set them in the vault of the sky to give light on the earth, to govern the day and the night, and to separate light from darkness. And God saw that it was good. And there was evening, and there was morning – the fourth day.

And God said, 'Let the water teem with living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the vault of the sky.' So God created the great creatures of the sea and every living thing with which the water teems and that moves about in it, according to their kinds, and every winged bird according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. God blessed them and said, 'Be fruitful and increase in number and fill the water in the seas, and let the birds increase on the earth.' And there was evening, and there was morning – the fifth day.

And God said, 'Let the land produce living creatures according to their kinds: the livestock, the creatures that move along the ground, and the wild animals, each according to its kind.' And it was so. God made the wild animals according to their kinds, the livestock according to their kinds, and all the creatures that move along the ground according to their kinds. And God saw that it was good. Then God said, 'Let us make humankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.'

So God created humankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. God blessed them and said to them, 'Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground.' Then God said, 'I give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food. And to all the beasts of the earth and all the birds in the sky and all the creatures that move along the ground – everything that has the breath of life in it – I give every green plant for food.' And it was so. God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. And there was evening, and there was morning – the sixth day.

Thus the heavens and the earth were completed in all their vast array. By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing; so on the seventh day he rested from all his work. Then God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done. This is the account of the heavens and the earth when they were created, when the Lord God made the earth and the heavens.

Prayer – StF 7 (*Ruth C Duck © The Pilgrim Press CCL No. 515642*)

God, who made the stars of heaven, God who spread the earth,
Breath of every living being, Fount of life and birth,
You have formed a servant people, led us by your hand.
Light of nations, shine in us; Brighten every land.
Living Christ, the light of nations, radiant as the sun,
Build us up, a growing body; knit your Church as one.
May our loving be a witness all the world may see.
Send your Spirit, bond of peace, source of unity.

Spirit God, equip your people, all with gifts to share:
Messengers to speak the gospel, ministers of care.
So may valleys rise to greatness, mountains be a plain.
Come, surprise us; change our lives; heal each heart in pain.
So may nations praise your greatness, do your will on earth,
Free the captives from their prisons, treat the poor with worth.
So may desert, coast and village sing new songs to you.
Light of nations, fill the world, making all things new. **Amen**

[Silence]

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come; thy will be done; on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory for ever and ever. **Amen.**

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours now and for ever. **Amen.**

StF 106 – God whose almighty word

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|---|---|
| 1) God whose almighty word
Chaos and darkness heard,
And took their flight,
Hear us, we humbly pray,
And where the gospel day
Sheds not its glorious ray,
Let there be light! | 3) Spirit of truth and love,
Life-giving, holy Dove,
Speed forth your flight;
Move on the waters' face,
Bearing the lamp of grace,
And in earth's darkest place
Let there be light! |
| 2) Christ, you have come to bring
On your redeeming wing
Healing and sight,
Health to the sick in mind,
Sight to the inly blind,
O to all humankind
Let there be light! | 4) Blessed and holy Three,
Glorious Trinity,
Wisdom, Love, Might,
Boundless as ocean's tide
Rolling in fullest pride,
Through the world far and wide
Let there be light! |

John Marriott

Reading: Matthew 3: 13 – 17 and Matthew 28: 16 -20

Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to be baptised by John. But John tried to deter him, saying, 'I need to be baptised by you, and do you come to me?' Jesus replied, 'Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfil all righteousness.' Then John consented. As soon as Jesus was baptised, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him. And a voice from heaven said, 'This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.'

Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. When they saw him, they worshipped him; but some doubted. Then Jesus came to them and said, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.'

Reflection

Along with our earlier reading from Genesis we have three readings which highlight the existence of the three in one Godhead. At the baptism of Jesus, the voice of God was heard, and the presence of the Holy Spirit visibly identified in the form of a dove. Matthew records that John the Baptist was reluctant to baptise Jesus, his own unworthiness causing him some doubts. But Jesus told John that it was proper for him to be baptised to fulfil all righteousness. God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit, united and working together for the fulfilment of the salvation plan.

Peter Lewis is pastor of a church in Nottingham and has written a book entitled "The Message of the Living God.". In his preface he writes: *"For me, God has always been the living God. In my childhood I knew Him as Father and Friend. In my early teens I gave my life over to him as Redeemer and Saviour; and in my years as a preacher of the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ I have consistently felt and seen the witness of the Holy Spirit to the Word of God in the Scriptures."*

These words give an insight into how, as three persons, God can meet with us and have a relationship with us. God's love is not static. God did not create us and then leave us to muddle through. When we turned from Him, he sent Jesus, who showed us the way to God and who died for us, that we may have eternal life. And He has blessed us with the gift of the Spirit who lives to help us and strengthen us.

Peter continues: *"How much of God would we know personally if we had never heard of Jesus Christ or if he had never come into the world? For many, God is a dark and distant deity precisely because they do not know the Father in the Son. How close would we personally be to God in love and obedience if the Holy Spirit had not been given to us in the work of rebirth?"*

Through the Trinity, God creates and loves us, Jesus liberates and saves us and the Spirit encourages and strengthens us. The Trinity is a community of love and life that we are invited to be part of share and in.

In the second reading Jesus himself reiterates the importance of making known the three persons of God. *"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."* These words of Jesus are often referred to as the Great Commission. If you look up commission in the dictionary you see that it is a noun and a verb: As a noun, a commission is an instruction, a command, or a role given to a person or group. Jesus gave his disciples an instruction, a command, and assigned a role to them. But it was not a commission just for the disciples in that time and place. He has given us the same. However, it is not a three-line whip – we have the option to ignore him. But as followers of Christ we will want to do all we can for him. And that's where the verb bit comes in. To commission is to order or authorise the production of something; to bring something into working condition. We are commissioned to do our part in establishing a world wherein everyone has heard the good news that God loves them; that Jesus died to save them and that the Spirit is here to guide, comfort and strengthen them. And it is through our own relationship with the living God, that we can do this, as we go with the love of the Father, the authority of the name of Jesus and the power of the Holy Spirit.

Let us pray:

Loving God, we thank you for the precious gift of your son, Jesus Christ. We cannot fully grasp the extent of your love for us which led you to send Jesus to earth, and even then, as a baby, vulnerable and helpless, entrusted to those you had come to save. But you are a merciful and gracious God, who does not give us what we deserve, but who heaps blessings upon us daily. We confess that we are not the people you created us to be: we are sorry for turning away from you and choosing to do our own thing; for neglecting to treat this beautiful world with respect and care; and for our selfishness and greed which so often harms our brothers and sisters in Christ. Forgive us we pray.

Devoted Jesus, we marvel at your obedience to God's will. We pray that we would follow your example, but we know that we are weak and easily led astray. Thank you for committing your life to living and dying for us that we might know a real relationship with God now, and one day, stand before Him forgiven and transformed by your blood.

Empowering Spirit, remind us of our calling to love and serve our neighbours, and in so doing strengthen us to declare the good news of the gospel to all we meet. Renew us in mind and body, and refresh us with grace and love, we pray.

And so, on this Trinity Sunday we pray that we will respond to God’s call through the example of Jesus and the power of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

StF 6 – Father we love you

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|---|---|
| 1) Father, we love you,
We worship and adore You,
Glorify Your name in all the earth.
Glorify Your name, glorify Your name,
Glorify Your name in all the earth. | 3) Spirit, we love You,
We worship and adore You,
Glorify Your name in all the earth.
Glorify Your name, glorify Your name,
Glorify Your name in all the earth. |
| 2) Jesus, we love You,
We worship and adore You,
Glorify Your name in all the earth.
Glorify Your name, glorify Your name,
Glorify Your name in all the earth. | |

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Reflection

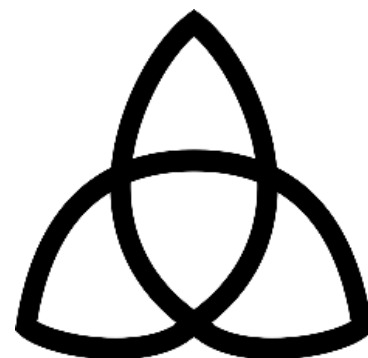
I have an after-school choir and one of the songs that the children love to sing is “Supercalifragilisticexpialidocious!” To help them with their performance of it I showed them the clip from the film “Mary Poppins”, which they now also love!! In the film, Mary Poppins has just won a horse race – using carousel horses of course! – and on being presented with her prize explains that in moments like this, when there seems there is nothing to be said, she uses this very special word. Now I’m not suggesting that we burst into a rendition of this splendid song, but you know sometimes words just don’t cut it! Do you remember Peter on the mountain at the Transfiguration? In the radiant light of Christ, the only words this witness could utter were ““Rabbi, it is good for us to be here. Let us put up three shelters—one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah.” He did not know what to say, they were so frightened. So maybe my words today haven’t helped, so I offer you a couple of images to contemplate:



According to the website, this product will clean your hair, wash and refresh your body and protect your skin from dryness! One product that meets three of your body’s needs. See the similarity?

This is a Triquetra, an image depicting an interrelated knot. Spend a moment quietly tracing your finger over it a few times while thinking about our Triune God. Place your name in the middle section and see how you are surrounded by God in all His fullness. How has God been close to you this past week?

Before our final hymn we will hear one more short passage of scripture, taken from Paul’s second letter to the Corinthians. In this letter to the new Christian church, Paul acknowledges that the followers have had struggles and indeed he gives them a few warnings, but he concludes his letter with words of encouragement and love.



We hear Paul's final greetings from 2 Corinthians 13: 11 – 14:

"Finally, brothers and sisters, rejoice! Strive for full restoration, encourage one another, be of one mind, live in peace. And the God of love and peace will be with you. Greet one another with a holy kiss. All God's people here send their greetings. May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all."

Paul knows the importance of living in unity and signs off his letter by reminding the listeners of the community of the Trinity, in which they should live and worship.

As we move into a new week with all these different images of 3 being 1 in our minds, here are some things to think about, watch for and feel:

Think about where you see the love of God...

Watch for when and where you see Jesus alongside you...

Consider when you feel the power of the Holy Spirit at work in you each day...

StF 410 – Lord, your church on earth is seeking

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1) Lord, your church on earth is seeking
Your renewal from above;
Teach us all the art of speaking
With the accent of your love.
We would heed your great commission:
Sending us to every place -
Preach, baptize, fulfil my mission,
Serve with love and share my grace. | 3) In the streets of every city
Where the bruised and lonely dwell,
Let us show the Saviour's pity,
Let us of his mercy tell.
In all lands and with all races
Let us serve, and seek to bring
All the world to render praises,
Christ, to you, Redeemer, King. |
| 2) Freedom give to those in bondage,
Lift the burdens caused by sin.
Give new hope, new strength and courage,
Grant release from fears within:
Light for darkness; joy for sorrow;
Love for hatred; peace for strife.
These and countless blessings follow
As the Spirit gives new life. | |

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Blessing

We go from here in the presence of God, our creating, loving Father;

We go from here in the presence of Jesus Christ, our risen friend and companion;

We go from here in the presence of the Holy Spirit, empowering us to be the people our threefold God would have us be –today, this week and always. And the blessing of God Almighty, Father, Son and Holy Spirit be amongst us and remain with us now and for ever. **Amen.**