

Trinity Sunday 2021 – Acts 2:32-47

So we come today to Trinity Sunday – a day when we think about what it means for God to be Father, Son *and* Holy Spirit. This has always been one of the tough head-scratchers of our faith: what does it mean for God to be one being with three natures? And yet it is also **the very heart of our faith**. All of the historic creeds agreed in the early years of the church revolve around this fundamental belief: ‘I believe in God the Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth; and in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord... I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life.’

So what’s the big deal? Wouldn’t it be easier not to have the Trinity? I asked the local schools recently if there were any particular themes they’d like an assembly on, and one of the Heads joked that maybe something on the Trinity for 5-11 year olds would be a good idea. Actually, I’d love to have a crack at that – but probably many of you listening to (reading) this today are thinking the same. So let’s spend a few minutes tackling this question, and reminding ourselves why understanding God as a Trinity is such a great thing.

And perhaps the best way to tackle that question is simply to think about what our understanding of God and of life would be without one or more of God’s three natures. Let’s start by imagining that we could understand God as the Almighty Creator only, there’s no Jesus or the Spirit at work in the world – how would we relate to God then? God would be a magnificent being, one to worship, to fear: but always at a distance. We couldn’t relate to God as a parent, even, because that idea comes primarily from Jesus – God would be a magnificent monarch, but a long way above the likes of us.

Now let’s imagine that God only manifested as a spiritual presence in the world. He was at work in all things, but never gave us a concrete image of himself as a human, or any clear sense that this divine being was in fact reigning over the universe. How would we relate to God then? We might be aware of a deep spiritual connection, but it would be hard to agree on how to live, because there was no divine example, only wise teachers making educated guesses. And would there be anything beyond this life, or is this it? Would there be any sense that wrong things would be put right, or that there was any ultimate purpose to any of this?

So let’s put Jesus in the heart of this, and if we agree that Jesus is sent by God, we now have a concrete and compelling vision of what God is like – we can suddenly understand terms like love or holiness or compassion because we see a perfect, divine human showing them in action. But without the Spirit, what we have is an inspiring example, but no assurance that we are part of God’s people, no power to change our lives. We just have to try hard and hope for the best...

You see, **once you start to look at what our lives would be like if God wasn’t Father, Son *and* Spirit, you see why we need this deep, 3-dimensional view of God**. We suddenly start to see how utterly amazing, wonderful and beautiful this God really is. We have a Lord to worship, a friend to walk with, an intimate presence to comfort and transform us from the inside out. We’re not limited to relating to God only in one way.

The Trinity helps us to answer life's most basic questions with rich and satisfying answers. *How near is God?* Is he up there, or in here? And the answer, wonderfully, because of the Trinity, is both. God is transcendent, and with us right here in our hearts at the same time.

What is God like? Is he a magnificent monarch, a wise teacher and judge, an inspiring example, a presence in our lives, a close friend? Again, because of the Trinity, we can say that God is all of those things.

How do we know that God is love? Because God as Trinity already has love within himself, a perfect eternal relationship within the Godhead. We know God is love because God is Trinity. We know God is Trinity because God is love.

And long before church leaders started to form this idea into a concrete statement of belief, **we can see this deep, dynamic view of God permeating the lives of the very first Christians.** As Peter preaches to the crowds in our passage today, God as Father, Son and Spirit is right at the heart of it: v33 'Exalted to the right hand of God, Jesus has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit, and has poured out what you now see and hear.' Father, Son and Holy Spirit working in perfect harmony to transform the world.

And when the crowd asks how to respond, Peter says that the Lord God is calling them all, and they should 'repent and be baptised, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.' (v38) In Jesus not only are we forgiven, we get access to God in heaven and the gift of God's Spirit for our lives now.

So let's not fear the idea of the Trinity – let's be glad! It means we can enjoy a 3-dimensional life with a remarkable 3-dimensional God: parent, friend and encourager.

In this season after Pentecost, as we celebrate the life giving power of the Spirit, let's remind ourselves that the *Spirit* transforms us to be more like *Jesus*, constantly reminding us of Jesus' love, giving us Jesus' gifts – that we might better worship the *Father* in heaven. Jesus is calling us all now, just like he did the crowd at Pentecost – as we come to him, may we also know the deep forgiveness, the mighty power and the abiding presence of God. The promise is for you, your families and even for those who are far off – for all whom the Lord our God will call. Amen.