**Sermon for Trinity Sunday 30 May 2021 by Revd Graham Phillips**

Isaiah 6.1-8

John 3.1-17

Here we are on Trinity Sunday, when we celebrate God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Normally our festivals celebrate an event - Christmas, Good Friday, Easter Sunday, Ascension Day, last week Pentecost - but today we are not celebrating an historical event, instead we celebrate a doctrine, a belief, the unique understanding of God as one God and yet three persons.

How much simpler it would be if it was one God and one person. Or three persons and three Gods. But neither of these are true. This is the mystery of God, and his revealing of Himself to us, his prized creation.

So let us try and unpack this.

There is One God, who is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. This means:

* There is exactly one God
* The Father is God
* The Son is God
* The Holy Spirit is God
* The Father is not the Son
* The Son is not the Holy Spirit
* The Father is not the Holy Spirit

An alternate way of explaining it is:

* There is exactly one God
* There are three really distinct Persons - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit
* Each of the Persons is God

One God, three persons, co-equal, co-existing, co-eternal. They have always been there and will always be there. Each of them is fully God. They are not different gods. Each of them is God. They are one God.

The Trinity is **not**

* Three individuals who together make one God. What I mean by this is that each of them is not 1/3rd of God.
* Three Gods joined together
* Three properties or forms of God like water, being in ice, liquid or steam.

Got it? The more I think about it, the more confusing it becomes. In some ways it is simpler to accept that they are three persons, one God.

What do we learn from this?

Relationship, communication, mutual interdependence and equality are all important to God. The three persons of God are in relationship with each other and call us into that relationship. Our lives are to be lived in response to that relationship. In being made in the image of God, we were created to be in relationship with God. Jesus said “I have come that you may have life and life in all its fullness.” That life is in relationship with God the Father, through the Son, in the power of the Holy Spirit.

And that relationship is founded and formed in love. For God is love. God is both the origin and source of love. Love comes from God and we love because he first loves us. It is in our relationship with God that we learn to love and to receive love. Ignore God and you miss out on His love. There is a God shaped hole in us that can only be filled by knowing and receiving God’s love. I think that at the end of our lives, we will not be asked “What did you achieve?” but rather, “How much did you love?” That is something that all of us can engage with.

Let us reflect on what we learn from the bible about God in three persons.

* God the Father: revealed by the Old Testament to be Creator, Lord, Father and Judge. The Old Testament also reveals the holiness, the separateness, the otherness of God. God as mystery, whose ways are not our ways, whose thoughts are not our thoughts. Isaiah’s vision of God that we have heard read is a wonderful example of the otherness, the mystery of God, who chooses to reveal himself to us.
* God the Son who came down from heaven, lived on earth as a human being, died and rose again and ascended into heaven and now sits at the right hand of the Father and intercedes for us.
* God the Holy Spirit who filled the prophets and disciples with new life and power - the presence of God in human beings - and does the same for us today - empowering and energising us.

I still find it extraordinary that God the Son, Jesus Christ, came down from heaven and became a vulnerable baby boy, grew into a man, suffered and died on a cross. God went through the pain and ignominy of this to rescue us from sin, from Satan and from death. This indicates to me the seriousness of sin, and the awful consequences of sin. We ignore sin at our peril. We see the devastation that sin and evil cause. Jesus is interceding for us at this moment and I’m so grateful for that, because I realise how weak I am and so prone to stepping out of his light and love, so easily can I fall into sin, whether that be not trusting God, or not loving as fully and deeply as he calls us to.

Praise God for those Intercessions. Praise God for Holy Spirit who strengthens and guides us, who leads us into truth. Praise God the Father who welcomes us with open arms, receives us into His presence.

We worship God the Father, we worship God the Son, we worship God the Holy Spirit. There is only one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. We worship only God, nothing else.

When Jesus was living on Earth he only did what he saw the Father doing. He was fully obedient to God the Father, being guided by the Holy Spirit. The three persons of God worked together in mutual harmony to achieve the purposes of God. We are called to follow that same pattern of interdependence, of faithful obedience. We will never get it as perfect as Jesus did but it is worth aiming for.

So our liturgy, our worship is inherently Trinitarian.

* Worship and praise are offered "to God through Jesus Christ in the Holy Spirit"
* Blessings are given "In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" - the sign of the Cross is a Trinitarian gesture.
* The creed, the fundamental statement of Christian belief, that we will say in a moment, sets out the Trinitarian nature of God.
* Baptism is carried out "in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit".
* Eucharistic prayers are firmly Trinitarian in concept.
* The doxology is Trinitarian: Glory be to the Father, and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit as it was in the beginning is now and shall be for ever. Amen.

Trinity, three persons, one God, is woven into the fabric of our worship and lives. We will never fully understand the mystery of God, this side of heaven. The more we try to explain God, to understand, to put Him into word, into language, the more our explanations seem to unravel, and the less we realise we know of God. His ways are not our ways, his thoughts are not our thoughts. Yet He calls us into relationship with Him, so enjoy Him as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.

Rev’d Graham Phillips