

Trinity Sunday 2018

Today is Trinity Sunday, one of the more difficult Sundays of the year on which to preach. Its main theme is the Oneness of God. We sit and ponder on what to preach about and I know several priests who plan their holidays, or organise the preaching rota, around Trinity Sunday so that they do not have to preach on this Sunday.

It is the only Sunday or feast day in the church's calendar which is named after a bit of church teaching and doctrine, rather than an event in the life of Jesus. Since the season of Advent we have been marking many different events in Jesus' life - his birth at Christmas and the visit of the Magi at Epiphany; the time in the wilderness as we walked through Lent with him; the heady events of Holy Week, leading up to the horrors of Good Friday and the Resurrection on Easter Day. Since Easter we have, like the early disciples, been trying to keep up with the risen Christ as he led them and leads us into new adventures. At Ascension the disciples had to learn to let Him go and at Pentecost the Church was born with power from on high and power within to live the risen life of Jesus. All that and more you can find in the pages of the Bible, celebrated in the liturgy and worship of the Church.

But we cannot point to an event which describes the Trinity, nor to a passage in the Bible which explains it. It's very much on its own and understanding what it might mean took the early church several centuries. We talk about one God, we believe in one God. We talk about God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit – but still only one God. As one preacher put it, it seems a bit like a god where the maths has gone wrong: $1+1+1=1!$

What does it mean and why does it matter? Well it matters, perhaps above all in this day and age, what sort of God we believe in. I say perhaps above all in this day and age because we have plenty of evidence of what bad religion can do in the world around us today. A false picture of God can lead to all sorts of false practice of religion – a brutal and vengeful God makes for a brutal and vengeful religion.

So what sort of God He is really does matter – that’s one reason why doctrine and theology (teaching and talking about God) plays a big part in the Christian life. For the Christian this Sunday highlights what sort of God we believe in. So, I suppose this is the bottom line.

Do you believe and trust in God the Father, who created the world? Do you believe and trust in God the Son who redeemed the world? Do you believe and trust in God the Holy Spirit who gives life to the people of God? What we believe about God is that He is the creator of the whole world, and he even made us in his own image and likeness. How amazing is that! He is as He is in Jesus, so there is hope: if you want to see God, point people to Jesus. He is ever present, deeply within us and for us here and now and this is what we want to proclaim about God, and the Doctrine of the Trinity is a way of summing that up.

In terms of the Church’ year we have had the heady exciting stuff I described at the beginning. We marked it with different festivals and different colours. We now go into the long Sundays of Trinity, what the church calls Ordinary time, marked with the colour green. I like ordinary time – God in the ordinary things and events and days of our lives. God is with us for the long haul, and we walk with Him, held safe in the communion of His love, our living God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen. Last Sunday we ended the Pentecost Eucharist with the following commission.

“For fifty days we have celebrated the victory of our Lord Jesus Christ over the powers of sin and death. We have proclaimed God’s mighty acts and we have prayed that the power that was at work when God raised Jesus from the dead might be at work in us.

As part of God’s Church here in Stoke D’Abernon, I call upon you to live out what you proclaim.

Empowered by the Holy Spirit, will you dare to walk into God’s future, trusting him to be your guide?

By the Spirit’s power, we will

Will you dare to embrace each other and grow together in love? **We will**

Will you dare to share your riches in common and minister to each other in need? **We will**

Will you dare to pray for each other until your hearts beat with the longings of God? **We will**

Will you dare to carry the light of Christ into the world's dark places? **We will**

The Lord is here. **His Spirit is with us. "**

So, as we grapple with the complexity of the Trinity, we are encouraged to think during Ordinary time about the basics. During the next months we will face things for the first time- the Admission of some of our young children to Holy Communion prior to Confirmation. We will build on the start that we have made to our Befriending project. We will build on our marvellous musical heritage as we progress our lunchtime concerts and other music events that attract a different audience, so to speak. We will strive to come to terms with our Vision programme and we will come to terms with being a parish in our own right- a return to the norm for some of you but for others, like me, it will be a bold, new and liberating experience. Let us take seriously the words of the Pentecost commission. I heard it again on Monday evening when I went with Andrew and Ray, to the Archdeacon's Visitation of Churchwardens as they were admitted to and reminded about their responsibilities.

Perhaps the mystery of the Holy Trinity makes sense if we think of it in the words of Jesus at the end of St Matthew's gospel, known as the great Commission, because the situation the disciples found themselves in was not that dissimilar to ours.

"Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. ¹⁷ When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. ¹⁸ Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has

been given to me. ¹⁹ Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

Amen.