

Sermon: Trinity Sunday

Delivered Sunday June 16th, 2019, Trinity Sunday. Lessons: Proverbs 8.1-4, 22-31; Psalm 8; Romans 5.1-5; Gospel of John 16.12-15

I have a bit of confession to make to you this morning; that I always get a little uneasy for some strange reason whenever anyone asks my mom: “how is it, that you raised both your boys to become priests, while I can’t even get my children to go to Church?” And of course, my mom’s reply is always the same: “well, I guess because we never took them to Church growing up!”

Now I love my mom dearly but her answer always kind of unnerves me a little, because my brothers and sisters, I know most all of you probably brought your children to Church when they were growing up, and now, I suspect for the most part, most of them don’t go to Church anymore, and neither do their children, your grandchildren. And for a lot of you, that saddens you. And it saddens me.

And I’m sure that some of you have had chats with your children about why they don’t go anymore, and perhaps some of you have heard them say: well, I don’t believe in God anymore, or it’s not relevant to me, (I mean lets face it, how many of you circled on your calendars today’s date because you couldn’t wait for me to preach up a mean storm on the doctrine of the Holy Trinity?) or I’m just too busy on Sundays, (you know got to get the kids to soccer practice or that hockey game...) or some of them maybe have even told you, and this just drives me up the wall, when they say that they think Religion has caused every single war and has been at the root of every major problem in the world! Have any of you heard that?

But you know, in another sense, I can understand why they get a sour taste in their mouths when it comes to religion and religious statements about who God is. Just this last week,

down in London, Ontario, some of you may recall that once again some hurtful and hateful graffiti was scrawled into a sidewalk outside of a mosque suggesting something despicable about the prophet Muhammad.

Now I'm certainly not a muslim nor an adherent to their faith, but that gets me mad. And I'm sure that gets you mad too, because whether those disgusting words were scrawled by a Christian or not, and I suspect they weren't, but it doesn't matter though. Those hurtful words bring God into disrepute because when our children and our grandchildren, they see this news, and they see what religious extremists of all types have done in Christchurch, New Zealand, or in Sri Lanka, or in Quebec, or Pittsburgh, or the Westboro Baptists, and they turn around and say to us: "why would I ever want to get involved in something like organized religion, where people like you are told to believe in certain statements, or creeds, or confessions about who God is?"

And so they point to our history, they look for instance, at the Great Schism of 1054, where the Western and Eastern Churches would split forever because they couldn't agree over whether the third person of the Trinity; the Holy Spirit, proceeded from both the Father and the Son, or a little later in history, when the East and the West weren't busy accusing each other of being heretics over that, we took out our displeasure over those who disagreed with our doctrines during the Holy Crusades, or during the Spanish Inquisition, or during The Great Reformation, and all the way down into the 20th Century with the troubles in Ireland between Protestants and Catholics for instance.

So you know, when it comes to what we believe about God and specifically to this doctrine of the Holy Trinity; which we're celebrating today; where we profess, as Anglicans in the first article of our religion found in our old burgundy Book of Common Prayer: that there is but

one living and true God...and in unity of this Godhead there be three Persons, of one substance, power and eternity; the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.” What does that mean to you? Anything? Or perhaps more importantly, when it comes to your children, to your grandchildren, what do you think that means to them? Is that what’s going to bring them back into our sacred places? Because you know, if we’re going to try to share with others and point to where we are seeing God in our day to day lives and all we’re going to do is preach some abstract doctrine that early Church fathers like St. Augustine theorized about who God is, I don’t think that’s going to get them to love or understand who God is?

But when it comes to what our scriptures for today have to say about who God is, in relation to our understanding of the Holy Trinity, I think it’s important that we remember that the first disciples of Jesus weren’t too sure either. You may recall how last week, Jesus’ disciple Philip even asked Jesus, well, when are we going to see the Father? And Jesus replied to Philip, that if you have seen me, than you have seen the Father. Jesus goes on to say, because what the Son is saying and doing, is what the Father says and does.

Jesus says in our gospel this morning: “God will glorify me, because he will take what is mine and declare it to you.” And the form that this will take will be in the form of the Spirit of Truth, that will guide you into all things...

Because remember, when the early Church, in the second century began thinking seriously about who God was, they still actually had the benefit of knowing people like the author of the Gospel of John who had known Jesus personally, who would have been able to recall that when people looked into the face of Jesus, they saw the face of God. When they saw Jesus heal people, they saw the healing of God coming out of him, and when they saw Jesus forgiving people’s sins, they were reminded that only God could forgive sins, and when they heard Jesus

preach, they heard the Word of God, the Father coming of out him, and later, when they saw Jesus resurrected, and walking among them, they saw again, the power of God the Father at work, literally in the flesh before them. And after Jesus ascended into heaven, and they received the power of the Holy Spirit, all of the sudden, they saw the first disciples, like Peter who were once a bunch of scaredy cats, all of the sudden start saying and doing the things that they had seen Jesus say and do.

I mean that's how the early Church remembered their story about who Jesus was and how he was related intimately with whom God was and how through the gift of the Holy Spirit given to them, they too saw how the grace of their Lord was now with them. And so you know, I think when it comes to our understanding of what the doctrine of the Holy Trinity is, and where we have seen it in our lives, that's where I think we have to go. Where we too have to show to others this overflow if you will, of the power of God, which we have seen and felt through the power of the Holy Spirit, which was given to us as Jesus promised it would through God the Father and God the Son and which animates our lives and our witness and informs our identity of who we are as a fellowship of people.

Because believe me, your children, and your grandchildren are just as hungry for community as you are. For the last few weeks, and especially on last Thursday night, we have seen tens of thousands of people congregating together in Jurassic Park outside where the Toronto Maple Leafs and the Toronto Raptors play. And when the Raptors won the NBA final on Thursday night, you could see on all their faces, all the excitement, and feel all the energy in the crowd as total strangers began hugging each other in joy and celebration because their identity as Raptors fans was being affirmed, that what was valuable in their lives was being recognized and celebrated and believe me, unlike the Church, they were united, not divided.

And so i think, that's our challenge is to show to them, and our children, our identity, and the way that I think we do this is by living out the story of our faith; the story of who Jesus is, and his teachings, and to point to examples in our lives to others where we see the overflow of the power of the Holy Spirit clearly on display, where we have seen the power of God moving among us; where we see people once divided who are now being reconciled with each other, and where we see people who were dead inside, now living out new possibilities in which we can point to these things as evidence of how we understand the doctrine of the Holy Trinity in terms especially where we have felt the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit. Amen.