

Trinity Sunday 2016

This morning we think about God as Trinity, the Holy Trinity. This is perhaps one of the hardest ideas to fathom in all our faith. It's a difficult day for preachers, trying to explain the Trinity. You might also say it's an even more difficult day for congregations – having to listen to a preacher try to explain the Trinity! Well, I'm not going to try to explain anything today, only issue an invitation. I want to issue an invitation to reflect on the Trinity as a relationship of love, and let that inspire you in the week ahead.

I want to open this morning by reading a poem by Malcolm Guite, a poet and college chaplain in Cambridge:

In the Beginning, not in time or space,
But in the quick before both space and time,
In Life, in Love, in co-inherent Grace,
In three in one and one in three, in rhyme,
In music, in the whole creation story,
In his own image, his imagination,
The Triune Poet makes us for his glory,
And makes us each the other's inspiration.
He calls us out of darkness, chaos, chance,
To improvise a music of our own,
To sing the chord that calls us to the dance,
Three notes resounding from a single tone,
To sing the End in whom we all begin;
Our God beyond, beside us, and within.

Malcolm uses the medium of poetry to explain something beautiful about the Trinity: that the three persons exists in an eternal relationship of love, and that we are made for the glory of the Triune Poet, and for one another's inspiration.

There are many areas of our life with God that we do not understand, indeed that we may not understand until we get to heaven and meet God, and I think that the Trinity is one of them. We can get tangled up in thinking how one God can be three persons, and how they relate to each other. Or the other thing we can do is to simply accept referring to the persons of the Trinity without ever thinking of how they interact and what bearing the Trinity has on our lives as Christians.

At the heart of it, God has revealed a mystery of the deepest kind, that He is not alone, but is a Trinity of love and relationship. It is perhaps here, more than any other area, that we can see the importance of thinking about God as Trinity. In thinking of God in this way we Christians are unique; no other religion does this. Religions are faced with a choice; many gods, or one God. Other religions have many gods, throughout history the Greeks and Romans had many gods. Most of the religions of the world today recognise only one god, one divinity. A casual glance at Hinduism would indicate that there are many gods, although this isn't actually the case, and the "many gods" are actually all avatars of the one divinity. Yet we are different, we strongly believe in one God, but recognise within that three persons, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, in relationship, in what Malcolm calls "co-inherent" Grace. A close, inherent relationship of grace.

What do we gain from this image of God? It is useful to occasionally ask of our aspects of our faith, "what's the point?" What's the point of thinking about three persons?

Well the first point is that God is revealed in this way in Scripture. Even though the term Holy Trinity nowhere appears in the Bible we recognise Father Son and Holy Spirit within its pages. We see their actions as being distinct, the Father in many parts of the Old Testament, the Son in the pages of the New Testament, and the Spirit mentioned in both.

The second point is that thinking of God as a Trinity teaches us about our common life, a life common with one another, but also with God. If God is in a relationship of love, shouldn't that be the model for all our relationships? God is in an eternal, perpetual relationship, but it is no closed relationship which shuns outsiders. We know about the Trinity precisely because God is in a relationship of love which goes beyond the persons of the Trinity. Everyone here has a place, is offered an invitation, an invitation to partake in the life of the Trinity, to enter into that love and relationship. That is why Jesus came, and died, and rose again, so that death should not be our end but that we should be in relationship with God.

So, to my invitation to you all: I invite you to spend today thinking about the holy trinity; not trying to fathom the finer points of doctrine or wrestling with the Greek terms from the church's history, but thinking about the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit all being in union with one another, and all working and wanting to bring us into relationship with them. Then think of how valuable that makes you, and those around you, and how you might invite them to partake of that relationship. You could, as Malcolm says in his poem, be the inspiration that awakens in them the realisation of the love they are held in.

In the name of the holy and ever loving Trinity. Amen.