

Trinity Sunday ... the Big Picture

... God is Big, Dynamic, and, God is Love

A sermon given on the Trinity Sunday, 12th June 2022 – by the Vicar the Revd Canon Jonathan Baker, in Beverley Minster

John 16:12-15

Trinity Sunday invites us to look at the big picture. Most Sundays we look at a particular aspect of what God has done or who he is, but on Trinity Sunday we have the opportunity to step back and try to put all the different parts together. Bit of a challenge, you might think. So how would I sum it up in just a few minutes? First of all, I'd want to say 'God is big.' That may sound obvious, but God is both outside and inside; beyond and within; both Creator and Spirit; at work, sustaining all things, at work within all things; self contained and not in any need of our worship or any aspect of the created world; and yet working within it to draw us out in praise and worship and desiring relationship.

There is only one God, and therefore he is God of everyone and every thing. God cannot be side-lined. God is there whether you believe in Him or not, whether you follow him or not. And so there is no division between sacred and secular. God sustains the world for believers and unbelievers alike. As Jesus puts it, *"He makes it rain on the just and the unjust."*

And there is no distinction between God and truth, or God and reason, in the sense that if you are a seeker after truth, then it is God who gives you confidence that that's a worthwhile search. As our gospel reading promises, "the spirit of truth will guide you into all the truth." And if you believe in the power of reason, that doesn't mean there's no room for God. It's God who has made the universe to conform to the pattern of reason, who's made it capable of us to discover the secrets of the universe through the use of our reason.

But at the same time, God isn't part of this world. He's not just another entity within the universe, only much bigger or more powerful. He is 'Holy Other.' He stands outside the created universe of space and time, and he stands above the rules of truth and reason, so we shouldn't expect Him to be subject to them any more than we would expect the plays of Shakespeare to tell us very much about the life of

Shakespeare. So that's what I mean about God being big - not only is it foolish to try and pigeonhole him or marginalise him, but he is wholly 'other,' wholly different from the world he's made. And we can only respond to that with awe and wonder, whilst also expecting everything he has made to have the capacity to reveal something of his glory. And when I say that God is big, part of what I mean is that God doesn't change. We can depend on Him. His love is constant. We may live in a world full of changes and chances, 'this fleeting world' as the Collect puts it, but God stands outside all of that, immovable and unchanging and utterly faithful and reliable.

So God is big. But God is also dynamic.

The insight that God is Trinity is full of movement. God reaches out into the world. There's a movement from God to the world in creation. He makes the world out of generosity, making it out of nothing, not because he has to, but because he wants to. And he makes space for it in his own being, giving it its own freedom. Freedom to love or not to love. And God sends his Son into the world. Christmas is all about heaven stooping down to Earth, the divine becoming human, the Creator becoming a helpless baby: it's full of action; it's lively; Jesus comes in order to reconcile the world to God; the Good Shepherd on his quest to search for what was lost; he comes to find us, wherever we are hiding; he walks alongside us as he did with those disciples on the road to Emmaus; his mission even takes him down into the jaws of death and hell - do you remember how in the Gospels, Jesus 'sets his face' to travel to Jerusalem for that final confrontation with all the earthly powers? Everything in the Gospels is on the move. Jesus comes into the world in order to bring us home. It's not just a movement out into the world, there's a movement back from Earth towards heaven, heading for home. Jesus taking us with him to the Father's side. That's what the Ascension is all about. Not Jesus leaving us, but taking our human nature home, to be seated at the right hand of the Father, to be in his presence forever.

And in responding to Jesus, we can be transformed and changed. We can experience forgiveness and compassion and a new beginning. And we can live in the world in the power of the Holy Spirit, being caught up in that rhythm of the Spirit reaching out into the world and coming back to God.

So God is big and can be trusted in a changing world. But God is also dynamic and can set us free and give us a new beginning.

And finally (if ever there was a call for a three-point sermon, Trinity Sunday would be it!), God is love who shows us who we really are. The Trinity is a community, a family perfectly united in love, a network of loving relationships. There is only one God, and whatever Jesus does involves the Father and the Spirit; and whatever the Spirit does involves the Father and Jesus; and whatever the Father does involves Jesus and the Spirit.

But in the Trinity, there are distinctions. So when we say God is love, there can be giving and receiving of love within God's own being. And we are made in the image of this God, which means we find our true purpose and meaning, not in being independent and self-sufficient and not needing anyone else.

We, each of us, discover who we uniquely are through our relationships with one another and with our Creator and Redeemer. It's not your DNA that makes you unique (isn't there something about we share most of our DNA with a banana? It's only a tiny fraction that makes us human); it's not your achievements that make you unique: the thing that makes you genuinely unique are your relationships. Nobody else has exactly the same set of acquaintances, friends and relatives that you have, and the healthier those relationships, the more human each of us becomes.

And that's why in the Church community we have to be reconciled. We can't ignore each other if we've been hurt or offended by another member of the Church family. If we do that, we only hurt ourselves and deny our calling to reflect the image of God.

So God is big, God is dynamic. And God is love.

How should we respond to such a God? Surely by putting our faith in his unchanging faithfulness; by responding to his calling to follow Jesus; and by allowing his love to show itself through us that we may play our part in making God known.

So may each of us discover more of this wonderful truth, day by day, month by month, year by year: this wonderful truth that God is Trinity and as we explore that and respond to it, so we ourselves become more truly the children of God he desires us to be.

Reading Text

John 16:12-15

¹² 'I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. ¹³ When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth; for he will not speak on his own, but will speak whatever he hears, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. ¹⁴ He will glorify me, because he will take what is mine and declare it to you. ¹⁵ All that the Father has is mine. For this reason I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you.'