

Some time ago a TV programme set out to chart what makes up a typical human life. It started by saying that on average we will live for two thousand four hundred and seventy five million five hundred and seventy six thousand seconds – that's seventy eight and a half years. If you are a woman you will speak between six and eight thousand words a day. If you are a man you will speak between two and four thousand words a day. We will make one thousand seven hundred friendships, eat five thousand apples, 854 tins of beans and 1,200 chickens. Our eyes will blink 415 million times, we will walk 15 thousand miles, drink 75 thousand cups of tea and shed 121 pints of tears. We will have one hundred thousand dreams and read five hundred books.

I love this stuff. But what the facts and figures don't tell us is what we do with all those seconds, what we say with all those words, how we act in those friendships, what we see with our blinking eyes, what has caused us to shed those pints of tears. They don't tell you that I'm the sort of person who likes to store up these kinds of facts, nor that I like reading obituaries. I like the way that a good one can give you the flavour of a person, sometimes through a simple description of an action or a phrase used. We begin to understand and appreciate and love a person not through knowing all their accumulated facts, nor through a thorough reading of their CV, but by little details. Sometimes a simple truth, put in the context of their life, can unlock our understanding.

This Sunday invites us to look at God's CV, to stand at the highest theological viewpoint possible and survey the great sweep of all that God is, and has been, and will be. This is beyond imagining and beyond the constraints of thought and language. It needs a massive map, and a complex guide. It takes words like 'consubstantial' and 'coeternal', 'perichoresis', 'essence' and 'persona'. I think that there can be two mistakes as we approach this. The first is to think that it is actually possible to understand everything about God as long as we are clever enough. The other is to think that we can't, and therefore to give up even trying.

What Trinity Sunday invites us to do is to stop for a moment and survey the scene. Just who is the God who has reached out to us in Jesus Christ by the Holy Spirit? Just who is the basis of our believing? Here we are asked to remember that our faith is not in a distant object, but in someone personal. We don't have conviction alone, we have a relationship. We have not just come to a rational understanding, we have been enfolded by love. We have not just signed a contract, we have been embraced by grace. So what is the nature of that person, who is the one to whom we relate, who is our gracious lover? Trinity Sunday is not about the 'what' of God, but the 'who' of God. To understand the essence, the substance of God, as the early theologians who evolved the doctrine of the Trinity over four or five centuries invite us to do, is to gain an overwhelming understanding and experience of the remarkable, unimaginable fact that this God loves us.

Take a moment to reflect on a name for God: King of Glory. Think about all the resonances of power and authority and sheer magnificence in those words. And then add to them the phrase 'I will love thee'. To survey the totality of God is to recognise that we are so far away from being able to be in God's presence that we should by rights crawl away with a hanging head. But this God, this King of Glory, has reached out to us, and invites us to offer

our love in return. Grasping at the complexity and awesomeness of God puts our love for God in perspective, but should not extinguish it. Far from that: to begin to reach for the heights and plumb the depths of God is to see how our love for God finds a place and is given life by him.

And this is not about the majesty and eternity and infinity of God alone, for that is only one aspect of the view we are looking at. This is Trinity Sunday. The God who has reached out to us and enfolded us in love is God who is a community, a relationship of perfect love. It is absolutely central to Christian belief that God the Father is God, that God the Son is God, that God the Holy Spirit is God, and that their unity is a trinity, their trinity a unity. Of course this pushes our thinking and our philosophising and our vocabulary to the very limit, but it is also magnificently sustaining and engaging to reflect on the belief that we can see all that we need to know of God in Jesus Christ, and that all our encounter with God in Christ is given to us by God the Holy Spirit.

Even as we stand back and take a look at the view of God in Trinity we are invited to catch at a detail, of Christ touching a leper, healing a blind man, eating with an outcast, blessing a child. We can remember a story, about a tiny seed growing into a great tree, a loving father welcoming back an errant child; and through that act, or that specific phrase, find our way in to the mystery of God. To turn our gaze to God who is creator, redeemer and sustainer is to find that a hand is outstretched to us, a welcome offered to us, a place laid for us.

And here, on this day, we find that love of God focussed and sustained. To sit here is to touch and handle the mystery of God in a form we can grasp. This is indeed beyond our imagining, yet given to us in tangible ways, in the bread and wine of the Eucharist, in our hymns and psalms, in scripture and song, in glass and stone. Thanks be to God, who is thrice holy, and who is to be praised now and for ever. Amen.