

TRINITY SUNDAY

2 Corinthians 13:11-13, Matthew 28:16-20 [MW20-22]

Sermon preached by Rev Wayne Thornton at Mangawhai and Wellsford, Sunday 07 June 2020

When I was a freshly ordained, almost dry behind the ears, curate in Taupo

- the Vicar said that when I was not doing anything else I was to visit those on the roll on my side of town
 - by and large I enjoyed doing this
- however one afternoon I had an experience I was not really prepared for

I was visiting a retired farming couple

- they told me they had been faithful members of the Anglican church for ever the husband had been on Vestry, and been a Church Warden
 - he looked me straight in the eye and said: what about this “Trinity business”?
- you don't go along with all that do you?

This “Trinity business” is actually something essential and foundational

- it is one of the questions asked of those about to be ordained as deacons, priests or bishops:
- in the 'Ordination Liturgy' on page 906 of our Prayer Book it says: “*Name*, will you give glory to God, the holy and blessed Trinity?” (and you have to say you will, or you don't get ordained!)

So on that afternoon in Taupo I was quite taken aback

- I knew you had to respect your elders and all that but I said, actually I do go along with the Trinity
- fortunately he did not ask me to explain it! he just said, Hmmh. Well, it's not for me:
- God is God and Jesus is Jesus and the rest of it as far as I am concerned is a load of rubbish
- and yet he gave me copies of a couple of poems he had written that showed a deep spirituality and real faith but “the Trinity” was just too much

It was my first indication that people can really struggle with this “Trinity business”

- and sometimes, as this man did, just give up

However “Trinity” is an essential doctrine, description, depiction

- of the God who loves us and calls us into relationship

The term “Trinity” is not mentioned in the Bible at all

- perhaps it's a theological more than a Biblical concept? yet it strives to tell us something essential about the nature of God
- it's a glimpse of the infinite God for our finite minds and it can be seen all through the Bible perhaps the most striking, graphic, obvious instance is Jesus' baptism
- this is how Matthew records it:

As soon as Jesus was baptized, he came up out of the water. Then heaven opened, and he saw God's Spirit coming down on him like a dove. And a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, whom I love, and I am very pleased with him."

Jesus – the Son is being baptised

- the Holy Spirit descends as a dove

God – the Father speaks words of encouragement

I don't think we are to get too hung up on all this

- we are able to catch a glimpse of God

but not fully explain God ... unless of course you are six years old

A father came home one evening and found his six year old daughter busily drawing on a sheet of paper on the floor. "What are you doing?" he asked. "Drawing a picture of God," she replied. "But no one knows what God looks like," said the father. "Well," the daughter responded with authority, "they will when I've finished!"

As it says in the quote in my "Wayne's Word":

- *the triune being of God baffles our finite minds*

I'm inclined to go along with a colleague who explained the Trinity like this:

- I am a *Star Trek* fan, and so was my colleague

he told me that apparently a physicist asked Gene Rodenberry, the creator of the *Star Trek* series, how the transporter worked

- the transporter, you know, the thing that beams – that instantaneously transports crew members to the planet surface, or another ship, another place, and back again

- Gene Rodenberry's answer to: how does the transporter work?
very well thank you!

- so when someone asks: how does the Trinity work?
just reply: very well thank you!

God is Father, Son, Holy Spirit – Creator, Redeemer, Giver of Life

- it can make your head spin if you try to explain it

so I turned to my "go to" person for such situations: C. S. Lewis

- sure he wrote in the middle of last century

but what he wrote is still very darn good and helpful

- here's something of his thinking about "Trinity"

please don't worry if you don't quite grasp it on the first hearing

I'll put it in my Wayne's Word in next Sunday's Pew News

(which will also be on line on our website)

You know that in space you can move in three ways - to left or right, backwards or forwards, up or down. Every direction is either one of these three or a compromise between them. They are called the three Dimensions. Now notice this. If you are using only one dimension, you could draw only a straight line. If you are using two; you could draw a figure: say, a square. And a square is made up of four straight lines. Now a step further. If you have three dimensions, you can then build what we call a solid body: say, a cube - a thing like a dice or a lump of sugar. And a cube is made up of six squares.

Do you see the point? A world of one dimension would be a straight line. In a two-dimensional world, you still get straight lines, but many lines make one figure. In a three-dimensional world, you still get figures but many figures make one solid body. In other words, as you advance to more real and more complicated levels, you do not leave behind you the things you found on the simpler levels: you still have them, but combined in new ways - in ways you could not imagine if you knew only the simpler levels.

Now the Christian account of God involves just the same principle. The human level is a simple and rather empty level. On the human level one person is one being, and any two persons are two separate beings - just as, in two dimensions (say on a flat sheet of paper) one square is one figure, and any two squares are two separate figures. On the Divine level you still find personalities; but up there you find them combined in new ways which we, who do not live on that level, cannot imagine. In God's dimension, so to speak, you find a being who is three Persons while remaining one Being, just as a cube is six squares while remaining one cube. Of course we cannot fully conceive a Being like that: just as, if we were so made that we perceived only two dimensions in space we could never properly imagine a cube. But we can get a sort of faint notion of it. And when we do, we are then, for the first time in our lives, getting some positive idea, however faint, of something super-personal - something more than a person. It is something we could never have guessed, and yet, once we have been told, one almost feels one ought to have been able to guess it because it fits in so well with all the things we know already.

You may ask, 'if we cannot imagine a three-personal Being, what is the good of talking about Him?' Well, there isn't any good talking about Him. The thing that matters is being actually drawn into that three-personal life, and that may begin any time - to-[day], if you like.

[silence]

Let us pray:

*Father,
you sent your Son to bring us truth
and your Spirit to make us holy;
open our hearts to exult you,
open our lives to reveal you,
our one true God,
Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
Amen.*