

Trinity Sunday, Year C

Proverbs 8:1-4,22-31

Psalm 8

Romans 5:1-5

John 15:12-15

Today is Trinity Sunday,
a day when, presumably,
your clergy are supposed to stand before you
and explain how it is
that God can be three persons—
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—
yet still one indivisible God.

To tell you the truth,
that's a kind of metaphysical mathematics
my heart can *kind of* understand
but my brain cannot touch with a ten-foot pole.

Perhaps the great British theologian C.S. Lewis
put it best when he said that
any person trying to comprehend the Trinity
is like a square trying to understand a cube.¹

If you've lived your whole life as a flat square,
and you start trying to visualize a three-dimensional cube,
chances are you're never going to quite get it.

In the same way,
you are a human,
and God is a Trinity.
We are not going to get that figured out
in one sermon today.

I cannot explain to you how it is
that God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit
are three-in-one and one-in-three.

But here's what I *can* do:
I can tell you the most important truth we learn
when we know that God is
three-in-one and
one-in-three.

¹ C.S. Lewis. "The Poison of Subjectivism." *Christian Reflections*. Ed. Walter Hooper. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1967. 79-80.

That truth
(surprise, surprise)
is *love*.

* * *

The fact that we believe in the Trinity
means we believe in a God
who is in constant relationship.

Christians believe
God the Father,
God the Son, and
God the Holy Spirit
have always existed together
in perfect harmony,
perfect union,
perfect love.

None of them try to outdo one another.
None of them supersede the others.
They are collaborative;
they are interdependent;
they are loving;
they are one.

That's why I think the best metaphor
I've ever heard for the Trinity
comes from St. Augustine.
He didn't go for three-leaf clovers.
He didn't fool with ice, water, and steam.

Instead, he merely suggested
that the Trinity—
the Father,
the Son, and
the Holy Spirit—
are best described as
the Lover,
the Beloved,
and the Love. ²

² St. Augustine. "On the Trinity." *Basic Writings of St. Augustine*. Vol 2. Ed. Whitney J. Oates. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1992. 790.

If that is true,
then God isn't just *in* relationship . . .
God *is* relationship.

Now let's take that a step further.

If God himself is the true, first pattern of relationship—
if God's very essence is to be
in harmonious love with Godself—
and if you and I are made in God's image,
then that means *we* are built
to be in constant, loving relationship, too.

It means that *every* loving relationship
you've ever had in your whole life
has come from God himself.

Every loving relationship
you've ever had in your whole life
is a divine echo—a ripple effect—
of that eternal loving relationship in which
God the Father,
God the Son,
and God the Holy Spirit
have been engaged since all eternity.

* * *

A few years ago our former bishop, Scott Benhase,
wrote an article in which he asked,
“Have you ever wondered
why God created the *Church*
to bear his message?
If God were better organized
he would have used a satellite
to beam his message directly into everybody's home.
We'd get the message without ever having
to leave the comfort of our lazy boy recliners.
We wouldn't have to ever be in relationship with anyone else.
Everybody could get the same message
without ever having to be dependent on anyone else,
without having to collaborate with other people.

“But,” he says, “it's not in God's nature to work that way.
Instead of pristine wave particles from a satellite,
we have one another to bear God's love to the world.

God has so ordered the Church that instead of isolated individuals,
we have to be in relationship with one another.
Instead of being self-sufficient,
we have to be dependent on one another.
Instead of being isolated operators,
we have to collaborate with one another.”³

In other words,
there is no such thing as a lone-ranger Christian,
because there is no such thing as a lone-ranger God.

That’s part of what it means
to be a Trinitarian.

* * *

Of course, it’s one thing
to talk about all of this.
It’s another thing
to experience it.

In just a few minutes we’re going to
stand, rejoice, and experience the love of the Trinity
as we baptize Blakely Grace Brandenburg—
daughter of Bryce and Amy Brandenburg—
into the household of God.

God will do all the heavy lifting in that moment.
As we baptize her
in the name of the Father
and of the Son
and of the Holy Spirit,
the love of those Three
will swirl in, and around, and through her
as it has always swirled in, and around, and through us,
and it will pull her permanently and forever
into the divine dance of God’s eternal love.

As you and I bear witness to all of this,
we will make some promises, too.

We will promise to let God’s love continue
swirling in, and around, and through us
so that it is always changing us.

³ Benhase, Scott. *Ecrozier*. 26 May 2010. <http://ecrozier.georgiaepiscopal.org/?p=197>.

We will promise to use God's love
swirling in, and around, and through us
so that through us it can change the world.

And we will promise to do all we can
to make sure Blakely is raised with that love
swirling in, and around, and through her
so she knows all her days
that the God of the universe
built her *out* of love,
for the *sake* of love,
that she might become a vessel *for* his love.

* * *

Brothers and sisters,
today we stand before one another
stupefied and inarticulate
because none of us are smart enough
to explain the holy Trinity
in all of its theological glory.
Anyone who says he or she can
is either an idiot or a heretic.

But here's what we *do* know,
and here's the grace for us today:

God the Father,
God the Son,
God the Holy Spirit—
by their very nature—
are love.

And if God is love,
then you and I
are made for love
as well.

It's as simple as that,
and everything else
is just the details.

Amen.