

Holy Trinity (12June22)

Proverbs 8:1-4, 22-31; John 16:12-15; Romans 5:1-5; Psalm 29 litany

It's Trinity Sunday.

So did you know that the Trinity is like a shamrock, that there's three parts to the one whole? But the Trinity isn't really like a shamrock.

Did you know the Trinity is sorta like water, that it can be liquid or it can be solid as ice or steamed into gas? All three are different but are still water. But the Trinity isn't really like that.

Or, one I came up with when I was a kid: did you know the Trinity is like kool-aid, that there's water and the colored flavoring and the sweetener? I even figured as a kid that the basic fundamental water was probably God the Father, and the visible part was God the Son, and the extra sweetener added at the end was God the Spirit. And the Trinity isn't really like kool-aid.

Or, a new one for today, did you know that the Trinity is like the MCC? There's Hope, and there's Advent, and they're separate, but come together for a sum greater than the parts and a unique third whole. Except the Trinity isn't really like the MCC (not least because you may point out we're really only a Binity).

Which is all kinda to say that my favorite thing to say about the Trinity is that as soon as you say anything about the Trinity, it's a heresy.\* Maybe you aren't particularly prone to caring about heresy.

Nevertheless, for those of you familiar with the Apostles' Creed, I'd even say that's heresy. There's a long list of the different kinds of heresies you can commit. One is modalism: breaking God into different modes or duties or time periods. See, an important thing about having one God is that you don't get to partition God or dissect God. When God shows up, you get God, not a partial God.

But the Apostles' Creed divides into three chunks, three modes, or three masks for particular roles. It says, "I believe in God the Father almighty,

creator of heaven and earth." But it's not the first person of the Trinity that creates. It's all of God. And God isn't a parent for being creator. God is only Father in relation to Jesus. We know the first person of the Trinity that way because Jesus refers to the Father or Abba, or maybe we'd be fine substituting Mother, that Jesus had two moms, God mom and human mom. At any rate, the parental term isn't in relation to be creator, much less as part of God.

Neither for the Holy Spirit, that the Spirit is the one who shows up for church or causes special speaking of tongues or wisdom or whatever, that she's the one moving in the world today. No, no no! You can't break it apart! She's still God. One God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all!

...Sorry, got a little wound up there.

At this point it may seem I've preached myself into a corner. If little analogies don't hit the mark, and if even the officially-battled-over-and-argued-about-in-councils-and-winding-up-with-a-theological-stamp-of-approval stuff still manages to loop around to spout heresy, how am I supposed to say anything at all about the Trinity that's correct or worth listening to?

I will admit and say again that maybe you aren't particularly prone to caring about heresy. And, perhaps to stereotype, I recognize that Hope folks may be ready to get past business of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit and whatever I'm blathering about and be ready for the next shared service when Pastor Jen will be out here with something much more coherent and appreciable. For that matter, it probably includes Advent folks, too.

So I'll just move on to say that trying to dissect the Trinity is a fool's errand. There's plenty we can explore or investigate or wonder about. But we don't know, for example, what dark matter is, don't know where electrons are or are even exactly like, don't know what happened to Schrödinger's cat. So trying to dissect God and parse out bits may naturally seem a bit forward and beyond our capabilities.

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\* for a fun view of this, see

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KQLfgaUoQCw>

But given our capabilities, the thing isn't really about putting God under a microscope, but is about you and your needs and your capabilities. That really is the important thing about the Trinity, that God is for you.

That's something of what is trying to be conveyed in the Proverbs reading, that God's goodness for you is engrained through all of creation. You don't need to go someplace special—it's along the side of the road and on hilltops and in doorways and in places where justice is served—and is like a blueprint for the arc of the universe, all bearing God for you to recognize.

And enjoy! Did you catch the word joy repeated there? Even if you don't really understand it. You can go to the hills and mountains, the seaside, look to the stars, or dig down in the soil, and the goodness is there for you from all time. And that's what you can notice about creation, regardless of which part of God did what.

Again, the importance of the Trinity comes through in Jesus' words from the Gospel, that this love is surrounding you and trying to be known for you, repeatedly. The truth is out there, to be given to you, to embrace you.

In a similar way, the importance of the Trinity comes through in our litany of Psalm 29, underscored by Paul's words, that even in places of suffering, when the trail gets rough, there is hope and potential, because of this God is who is for you. Suffering is not separate from God, even in the worst tragedies. I can't say how the awful stuff fits into the blueprint of God's masterplan, but we observe that living with this God is at least an antidote, a salve leading to salvation, bringing peace.

So if anything, your invitation today is to live into it, to trust, to hope, to recognize this way of wisdom, to find relief, to delight and enjoy, even if you can't fully explain the Trinity and one-in-three and one-in-three.

And, in worship outside, here at the end of a program year, looking toward where your summers may take you, I also can't explain, but simply hold up the reminder for you that the MCC may not be

really like the Trinity, but the Trinity likes you. Even when you don't feel you can represent God, God is present for you, here and elsewhere.

Hymn: "Creating God, Your Fingers Trace" (ELW 684)