

Sermon for Trinity Sunday, June 7, 2020

The great theologian, Augustine of Hippo, was walking along the beach one day, taking a break from writing one of his many books on the Trinity. The great scholar just couldn't get his mind around this great mystery. The story goes that he saw a little boy digging a hole in the sand, and then running to the ocean, filling up his bucket with the seawater, running back to the hole, and emptying the water into the hole. Augustine watched as the child went back and forth several times. Finally he asked the boy, "What are you doing?" The boy said, "Trying to fill that hole with the ocean." And Augustine said, "You'll never drain the sea into the sand." And the boy said, "Neither will you be able to fit the Trinity into your mind."

Christians have been wrestling with the nature of the Trinity since the beginning of the Church. According to the Council of Nicaea in 325, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are "three persons of one substance." I have to keep rereading my favorite explanations of the Trinity, I have to keep pondering how I see and experience the Trinity in my life. So perhaps the Church does not assign this doctrine to us each year to define or explain the Trinity, but to remind us to notice where we see the Trinity in the world around us, in our community here at Christ and Grace, and in our personal lives.

We use the words Father, Son and Holy Spirit so easily and freely in our prayers and worship. At the very core of theological explanations of the Trinity is the idea that Father, Son, and Spirit are in essence a community. Moving as one, always connected, always complementing each other, always giving and receiving love.

And why does the doctrine of the Trinity even matter? How many of us are thinking about church doctrine in the middle of a pandemic or with all the unrest that is happening in our nation right now? Probably not many of us! But maybe the nature of God does matter to us in times of dissension, crisis, fear, and loss. Because when chaotic events happen they often pull back a veil that reveals selfishness and individualism; that reveals that our community is not as strong, good, healthy, and whole as we might prefer to think. This pandemic, and then the final straw of yet another injustice, as the very breath of life was pressed out of George Floyd, uncover our sins known and unknown, things done and left undone.

Today's reading from the last chapter of Matthew is often referred to as the Great Commission. "Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. When they saw him, they worshipped him; but some doubted." Interesting that even as they were worshipping Jesus, who was right there in front of them, some of them doubted. But Jesus does not appear to judge them for their doubt or think that in their doubt they are any less equipped to work in the kingdom. Rather than focusing on their doubt Jesus simply says, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit..."

If you have the least doubt in your heart right now, about your relationship with Jesus, or about all that is happening around us, I want you to hear that Jesus honors that doubt. I pray we will take time to be still with that doubt and invite the Spirit of truth to convict us and empower us to begin the work of becoming a beloved community of God, loving one another. Our relationships, our interconnectedness, to God and to one another matter.

God is a community – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit together are one community, one God – what we call the Trinity. And so when we come together as a community of love, we gain more and more the potential to reflect the image of God in which we are created. The image of God that is love and forgiveness, equality and justice.

Our Presiding Bishop, Michael Curry has reminded us this week that we are all children of God, no matter the color of our skin, no matter whether we are protestors or police. We are brothers and sisters, related to one another in Christ, and empowered by the Holy Spirit to live together in peace as we ensure justice and the welfare of all.

So how do we model the image of God in which we have been created? How do we live together? We make a daily decision to live the way of love. Bishop Curry reminds us that the opposite of love is not hate, it's selfishness. Jesus lived and taught this way of love, an unselfish life seeking the good, not of ourselves alone, but of all humanity. And it starts as a decision. Bishop Curry suggests that one symbol for love is a face mask. I wear one to protect you, and you wear one to protect me, and when we do that we all win!

Perhaps defining the Trinity is less important than experiencing the Trinity. We live and breathe because of the relationship we have with God and with one another, created in the very image of the Trinity, created to proclaim by word and example the good news of God in Christ, to seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving our neighbor as ourselves, and striving for justice and peace among all people, respecting the dignity of every human being.

There will always be doubts, whether we are contemplating the Trinity or finding ways to dismantle the sin of racism and end injustice. There will be days that seem as futile as trying to drain the sea into the sand. May we take our doubts to God in prayer, and then strive to live our lives reflecting the image of our Creator; for in the striving we will experience the power of the Spirit helping us to proclaim the love of God as we walk in the way of love with Jesus. Amen.