

## TRINITY SUNDAY – June 4, 2023

It's a Mystery!

[based on Matthew 28:16-20]

Last week, I received an email that talks about what God is like. Part of it goes like this: God is a little like a Visa card – He's everywhere you want to be; God is like Scotch Tape – You can't see Him, but you know He's there; God is like Alka Seltzer – Oh, what a relief He is; God is like Tide – He gets the stains out that others leave behind; God is like Bounty – He's the quicker picker-upper.

These are cute ways to describe what God is like. But, because our human brains are limited, it's hard to understand everything there is to know about God. And one of the proofs of this, is the doctrine of the Holy Spirit.

When I was waiting to be appointed to my first charge in Marmora, I was working at a temporary job in a call centre. Some of the inmates (sorry, the employees) were talking about faith and believing - something I was surprised to hear.

Very soon in that discourse, the subject of the Trinity came up. I tried my best to explain it. Maybe I helped a little...I don't know. But at the time, as I listened to myself talk, it sounded more like "Blah Blah Blah Blah Blah, I don't know what I'm talking about." And, after that farce, I really felt like God was telling me, "Wally, you really need to get a grip on this, because your church needs to get a grip on this".

The Trinity is one of the distinctive doctrines of Christianity. Just because it's hard for the brain to understand, doesn't mean we should pretend it's not there. Matthew 22:37 says to 'Love the Lord your God, with all your heart and with all your Soul, and with all your *mind*'. There's an intellectual side to Christianity. We are expected to think through the teachings of Scripture for ourselves.

Do you remember the Bereans, the group that Paul was writing to, in Acts 17:11? It says that they received the message with great eagerness and examined the scriptures daily, to see if what Paul said, was true.

Few things would please me more than to hear someone say about our church, "You guys remind me of the Bereans. You are always in the Word, always trying to get to the bottom of things". And that's what we want to do with the Trinity.

Yet there have been times when I've wondered to myself, "How can I believe something that I'm not even sure I understand? How can God be one and God be three at the same time? And even if I did understand it, how in the world do I explain it without making everyone sitting in the pews, confused?"

As I look at the Scriptures, I see four things that are true about the Trinity.

**Number One:** I see the unity of the Trinity, especially in the creation of the world. In Genesis 1:26, "Let **US** make man in **OUR** image. It doesn't say, "Let **ME** make man." It says, "**Let us!**" God is involving the other members of the Trinity in the creation of mankind.

How do I know He's not referring to the angels? Because, in Genesis 1:1, you have God creating the heavens and the earth. And, in verse two, you have the Spirit of God, hovering over the face of the waters. In Colossians 1:16, we are told that Christ made the heavens and the earth! The Trinity, working together in unity, is a beautiful picture of how things could be in the church.

Way back, when I was at school in England, I attended a Sunday School teachers' conference which was held in a sports arena. There were 20,000 teachers in attendance. These teachers were from hundreds of different denominations around the country. And, I especially remember the last night of the conference, when all 20,000 of us took communion at the same time, totally united around the purpose of loving God and sharing that love with others in our sphere of influence.

It was one of the most beautiful Christian experiences I have ever had. I remember thinking, "This is the way things are supposed to be...Baptists, Anglicans, Lutherans, Presbyterians, Evangelicals, Pentecostals, Catholics, Reformed, all around a solitary goal of winning the world for Jesus Christ. Christian unity should be a reflection of the unity that already exists within the Trinity.

**The second thing** I see is the diversity of the Trinity. The members of the Trinity work together, but they don't always do the same things. Look at salvation - God the Father governs the world; God the Son redeems the world (on the cross); and God the Holy Spirit gives us the power and grace to change the world.

I'm beginning to learn how much God loves diversity. I used to get discouraged when I realized that there were so many things that I couldn't do, that others could.

There have been times in my life when I wished I could cook like Julia Childs, or play the guitar like Leona Boyd. But you know what? Even though I can't do some of those things, that's exactly the way God wants it, because He, deliberately, made us different, so that each one of us can contribute something unique to society.

It works the same way with the Trinity. Each member of the Trinity contributes something special and unique to our lives. Romans 8:28 says that God works for our good. Verse 35 says that Jesus prays for our good. And, verse 27 says that the Holy Spirit helps us to pray for our good.

**The third thing:** I see the intimacy within the Trinity. In John 3:35 it says that the Father loves the Son and has given Him all things. And in John 14: 31 Jesus says, "I love the Father! I do exactly what my Father commands me".

This tells me that our God is personal. He's intimate. He is a God who exists in relationship. The beautiful thing is, that God wants to have the same intimacy with each one of us, that He has within Himself.

Have you seen the old Movie, "When Harry Met Sally?" At the end, Harry and Sally are separated. But Harry runs all the way across town on New Years Eve, and crashes a party to see Sally. And Sally says, "What are you doing here?" Harry replies, "I'm here to say that I love you." Sally's comeback? "You expect to barge in here on New Years Eve, say "I love you," and that will make everything OK?" His response? **"Yes!"**

Sally says, "Harry, how do you know you love me?" Harry smiles. "I love how your nose wrinkles up every time you ask questions like that...I love how you can't make up your mind about what to order in a restaurant...I love how you are the first person I want to talk to when I get up in the morning, and the last person I want to be with at the end of the day."

That's how our loving, Triune God feels about us. Just as Harry travelled across town to pursue a relationship with Sally, God travelled through heaven and time and space to pursue a relationship with each one of us. And so, what's necessary, is for us to say, "Lord Jesus, it's impossible for me to hate You. I love You. Come into my life."

So we have now looked at the *unity* of the Trinity, the *diversity* of the Trinity, the *intimacy* within the Trinity, and **number four**, we see the *divinity* of the Trinity. Now, the Bible is crystal clear that there is only one God, one divine being. Deuteronomy 32:39 says, "There is no God except me."

Isaiah 43:10 says, "Before Me no God was formed, nor will there be one after me." James 2:19 says, "You believe that there is one God. Good!"

But the same Bible that says there is only one God, also says that the Father is God, the Son is God and the Holy Spirit is God. So, those persons must be the One True God.

If you look at Paul's letters, he starts almost every one by saying, "Greetings in the name of God the Father." So, we know that the Father is God. But there are also verses that teach that Jesus Christ is God.

You remember the story of doubting Thomas in John 20 that Rebekah spoke about last week? Do you remember what he said when he saw and touched the risen Christ for the first time? He said to Him, "My Lord and my God." And Jesus said, "Good answer, you got it right!"

And there are also scriptural references teaching that the Holy Spirit is God. You remember in Acts 5 when Ananias and Sapphira lie to the Holy Spirit about how much money they gave to the church? Remember what Peter told them? He said, "You have not lied to men, but to God!" So, lying to the Holy Spirit is the same thing as lying to God!

The Bible is very clear that there is One God, eternally existing as three persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Now, how do we explain these people? Let me caution you by saying that there is no way that feeble human beings can know all that there is to know about God. John Wesley once said, "Bring me a worm that can comprehend a man, then I will show you a man who can comprehend God." You can read every book in the library and you would barely scratch the surface of what God is all about.

Corinthians 13:9 says, "We know in part and we prophesy in part." In other words, we only have part of the story now, and we are not going to get the rest of the story until we get to Heaven. The bottom line is that it is very hard for a small human brain to totally comprehend something as huge as the Trinity - it's too big for us.

Having said that though, let me give it a shot. Take light for example, the phenomenon of light. Scientists tell us that light has three characteristics. There is **visible light**, from the sun, lamps and flashlights. There is **invisible light** - infrared. There is **heat** that is generated by incandescent light bulbs. So, in this concept we call light, there is actually light we can see, light we cannot see and light we can feel. It's the same thing with the Trinity. We may not completely understand its complexity, but we accept it, because the Word of God says it is true.

I am perfectly alright with the fact that there are mysteries and puzzles in the Bible – things I won't understand until I'm dead. I'm ok with that. I've got enough on my plate with things that I **do** understand! I'm more concerned about doing what God says, than I am in figuring out all that He is. Besides, how vain is that, to think that we NEED to understand the mind of God?!

So, having accepted the Trinity intellectually, we need to be open to experiencing the Trinity personally.

There is a story about an twelve year old boy who became a Christian at a revival service. The next week, his friends questioned him about the experience. One friend asked him, "Did you see a vision?" The boy said, "No." Another friend asked, "Did you hear God speak?" The boy said, "No."

So, they said, "Well, then how do you know you were saved?" The boy searched for an answer. Finally, he said, "It's like when you catch a fish. You can't see the fish, or hear the fish. You can feel him tugging on your line. I just felt God tugging on the line of my heart, and the message was a message of love, just for me."

Here's a boy who experienced the saving work of the Triune God in his life. Maybe the Lord is tugging on your heart. Maybe He's saying, "I want to have an intimate relationship with you, like the one I have with the boy; like the one I have with my own self; like the one I have with millions of people around the world".

Three-leaf clover, water/ice/steam, Father/Son/Spirit...three parts to one whole! We are thrice-loved and I'm more than okay with that!! AMEN