

THE FATHER, THE SON & THE HOLY SPIRIT

(2 Corinthians 13.11–14 and Matthew 28.16-20)

Today is Trinity Sunday, the day when we learn about God in His three roles namely as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Rather strangely however the word 'Trinity' appears nowhere in the Bible. The word is used by the church simply as a sort of shorthand. However the titles Father, Son and Holy Spirit are used throughout the New Testament. And the Son and Holy Spirit are gifts from the Father to enable humankind to come close to him. The Son and the Spirit show us what the Father is like.

Today's readings describe how the church uses these words. In the Gospel reading we have Jesus' command that we are to use these titles in baptism. They are at the very core of our creed. And the quotation from 2 Corinthians contains the Grace that is used whenever groups of Christians meet together.

Sometimes though, the ideas that they engender can be controversial or misunderstood. My neighbour Secander simply cannot understand that Christians worship one God. He is convinced that we worship three gods. I think that is because we come with lots of preconceptions we need to go back to basics. So let's go back to the very beginning of everything and stand before God.

I have told you before that when I was a child that it was an old traditional song that first awakened me to the reality of God. This was 'Green Grow the Rushes O'. I won't attempt to sing it. And anyway it's the first stanza that got to me a lifetime ago. 'I'll sing you one O. One is one and all alone and evermore shall be so.' It was explained to me then that it was God who was the One alone.

For me, as an adult the first chapter of Genesis hits me in the same way. The Bible starts with a great hymn of creation and the first sentence starts, 'In the beginning, God ...' - nothing else. No space. No time. 'In the beginning God made the heavens and the earth.' God our Maker who makes everything there is who makes space, creates time alone.

It's remarkable to me that the Bible written over many generations is so much of a unity - a record of God's plans and actions. God is the same at the beginning of all things in Genesis as he is at the end of all things in Revelation, the last book on the Bible.

Is that it? Well no. Although God is one - is outside time and space his Spirit is free to move within creation and God acts - he speaks he is a personal God. Remember that one of the titles used for Jesus was Word of God. God makes human beings as the crown of his creation. He makes men and women in his own image and into them breathes his Holy Spirit.

The Quakers - the Society of Friends make much of this belief that all human beings have something of the creator in them. Everyone is a child of God whether they know it or not. The philosopher and militant atheist said that deep within in him he struggled with this feeling of deep longing that he couldn't satisfy. Maybe St. Augustine was right when he said that a man was restless until he found his rest in God.

The Old Testament speaks of the last days when God himself will come among his people and restore the relationship between God and his creation, broken when humanity turned away from their maker. At the same time the Holy Spirit in his fullness would be available for all.

The New Testament is essentially a record of the beginning of these Last Times. John's Gospel starts in the same way as the first chapter of Genesis. In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God... And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us.

Jesus is very clear about his identity. "I and the Father are one. No one comes to the Father except through me."

Before Jesus was crucified he promised his disciples that his Father would send them the 'Counsellor, the Holy Spirit who would teach them all things and will remind them of everything he had said to them. So we have Jesus talking of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

The reading from Matthew's Gospel is the formula by which we are baptised - become part of the church family. It is a reflection of what happened at Jesus' baptism at the beginning of his ministry. 'As Jesus was praying heaven was opened and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven. You are my son whom I love, with you I am well pleased.' Father Son and Spirit all together at the same time.

The lengths that God was prepared to go to give people a way back home to their Father reveals his nature. John in his letters says again and again that God is love.

Everything he has done in sending Jesus among us and giving us the gift of his Spirit is because of his great love for us.

We can get ourselves bogged down thinking about the Trinity but if we just accept it and experience for ourselves the guidance of the Spirit and the joy of following Jesus then let it be. The reading from 2 Corinthians includes the Grace and it's all good and all free gifts from God. We could put it that we come to the Father through the Jesus as the Son in the power of the Spirit. God the Father above, Jesus the Son our brother and beside us, and the Spirit of God in us.

But at the end God is God. He is the one and only and he is alone. - And he loves us all and is the great joy giver.

So may the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all.