

Trinity Sunday Year B 27/5/18 All Saints 10:30am. SSPP 6:pm

May God inspire us in our speaking and listening and may we be open to what God wants to say to us.

I wonder if you can recall times, moments that for you were an experience of worship, of being aware of touching into something that was transformative, that spoke to you of otherness, the otherness of God. Maybe it was experiencing a beautiful magnificent view or scene, maybe it was hearing a beautiful piece of music that transported you. Was it a moment of experiencing worship at some service.? Those are special important moments that help and inspire us on our journey.

In our worship together music is often an important ingredient of being able to join together. Music evokes in us a different response from the said word. If I say Trinity Sunday to you, I wonder what hymn springs to mind. For me the first is Holy, holy, holy, Lord God almighty, the last verse which ends merciful and mighty! God in three persons blessed Trinity. The Mystery of the Trinity lies at the heart of our faith, yet what we mean by it is not something we or anyone else are able to explain.

In the creeds, that we affirm every week in some version in our main Sunday worship, we state that we believe in God the Father Almighty, creator of heaven and earth, in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only Son of God and in the Holy Spirit the giver of life. If we were asked to explain exactly what it is that we believe I think most of us would find ourselves pushed in trying to express the inexpressible. I share the view expressed by Bishop Hugh Montefiore, that the creeds are like an ancient hymn that has been sung by Christians down the centuries that attempt to put into words the inexpressible.

In our reading from Isaiah we have the wonderful vision of the Lord seated on a throne and all the angels calling to one another Holy Holy Holy is the Lord Almighty, which is of course the inspiration for our hymn. Another Trinity hymn which seeks to express the inexpressible is Immortal Invisible God only wise. God whom we

gather to worship is a mystery, a mystery that none of us will fully understand in this life. This God of ours, who is both the source of our being and our creator cares about each one of us intimately and invites us into a personal relationship with him, that seems and is totally beyond our comprehension. It is also difficult to get our heads around God whom we and we would say all humankind is called to worship also being the one who loves, knows and understands us and wants to have an intimate personal relationship with every one of us.

When we gather together for worship or fellowship, it is an opportunity not only for us personally to be more connected, embraced, in touch with God, but also a call, an opportunity for us to draw those outside into this communion with God. To some extent this seems to happen at Christmas. As we know our age, now is a time where we are more connected with each other through electronic means but it is also the age where many people feel lonely and isolated. People are connected but in real terms of relationship it is mostly surface level. We need to ask for the guidance of the Holy Spirit as to how best to reach out and connect with others, that they may come to know the God who loves and cares for them.

Jane Williams has some interesting reflections on Jesus and Nicodemus, clandestine conversation. She makes the statement that “The belief that God is Trinity is the foundation for the belief that God is also love.” Nicodemus comes to Jesus under the cover of darkness, as she remarks like a young revolutionary rather than a weighty religious leader. Nicodemus has thought out what he wants to say and discuss with Jesus, but Jesus wrong foots him. Nicodemus wants to keep things on his track but Jesus says you can’t check off God’s activities by your little checklist. You have to tear them up and start again.

Nicodemus deserves credit for his reaching out and wanting to understand more about what Jesus is saying but he is wanting to fit what Jesus is saying into his frame of reference and understanding of God and Jesus is saying “he has to let go of all the measures he

has been using and launch out into the unfathomable reality of the totality of God's love". He has to be born again start afresh. She says the challenge to Nicodemus and to us is "to learn to walk and speak and think and grow in a world where the love of God is the breathe we breathe so that our every response to the world around is informed by that love". That is I think the work of a life time and rather than getting dispirited and giving up we need to remember we have the gift of God's Spirit to help us. We need to nurture and cherish our relationship with God, our God who is love. Each one of us is beloved of God and God calls us to be channels of that love for others. God calls us to be encouragers of each other.

When we come to worship together God, our God of love and relationship wants to feeds us. What speaks to me most clearly of this is the famous icon of the Trinity by Andrey Rublev. More accurately called "the hospitality of Abraham". It depicts the appearance of the three angels to Abraham at Mamre. Their message to Abraham and Sarah was that they were going to have a son. It was the time Sarah was eves dropping and overheard and laughed. (In western art, we are used to seeing depictions of the Trinity, with the Father as an elderly man and the Spirit as a dove, though as neither have been seen they can't be depicted. Only the Son, who was made flesh do we know in human form, though we don't know what Jesus looked like.) The figures in the icon are symbolic. The one in the middle is representing Christ and the one on his left the Holy Spirit and they are both looking to the Father, on Christ's right.

The word icon has become more familiar for us as we use computers. We click on the icon and it enables us to enter into what ever it is that we have selected. Icons in the religious sense are about the same thing. Icons are an invitation, a way in, an invitation into relationship. This icon is an invitation into the life of the Trinity an invitation that is always there for us.

The God whom we worship is one who is relationship, is relational and it is a relationship which God invites us into.

There is a place for us at the table, God invites us in, wants to fill us with the Spirit that we may show Jesus in our lives. We are drawn into the relationship with God. Each of us may be drawn in by our relationship with Jesus, or by our relationship with the Father or the Spirit. As Jane Williams put it “to learn to walk and speak and think and grow in a world where the love of God is the breathe we breathe so that our every response to the world around is informed by that love”. We are drawn in but also sent out. The Triune God we worship sends us out to bring in the kingdom of peace and justice for all in our world.

Let us pray together the words of this week's collect

Holy God, faithful and unchanging, enlarge our minds with the knowledge of the truth and draw us more deeply into the mystery of God's love, that we may truly worship him, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, one God now and for ever.