

Trinity Sunday 26th May 2024 - 'God the Holy Trinity'

Introduction

This Sunday, we reach a pivotal understanding of God. Our unique Christian faith and practice depend on God the Holy Trinity. Recollect what we have shared. At Christmas, we welcomed with excitement a baby, God the Father's Son, the promised Christ. In Lent and Holy Week, we felt the emotions of the adult God-man, aware that he would be crucified, ending with the horror of Good Friday and the silent stillness of Holy Saturday descending like the calm after a storm. On Easter Day, mourning gave way to the exuberant joy of Jesus' resurrection, forty days of Eastertide rejoicing, and Jesus' promise at his Ascension into Heaven, that he would not leave those who believed in him as orphans - powerless. Finally, at Pentecost, the Holy Spirit came, bringing life-changing spiritual gifts, in fulfilment of that promise. Not only was Jesus' promise fulfilled but also our understanding of God. The Holy Spirit is God present within, and between us, binding us with love and faithfulness to the ever-living Father and Son, and to each other. Thus, what theologians call 'the Godhead' is complete and can act in the world through us.

'God the Holy Trinity'

by

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Isaiah 6:1-8; Psalm 29; Romans 8:12-17; John 3:1-17

Introduction

Today, we call to mind our uniquely Christian understanding of the one God in three, otherwise known as the three in One. And if of God then also of the Cosmos, our world, our place in it, and the blessing of Christian spirituality for life.

John 3:1-17

Some people talk and write about their different forms of spirituality. What is Christian spirituality, then? As Jesus explained to Nicodemus, we are born again when we accept the spirit of God into the depths of our being. We begin a new way of living, not from a decision to change, not forced but from within.

But first, what is our understanding of that word 'God'? How do you picture God in your imagination? If you cannot imagine such a Being, does it follow that God doesn't exist and is therefore irrelevant? Christianity arose from the teachings, work, life, death, and resurrection of Yeshia of Nazareth, our Jesus.

Judaism long held the seeds of Christian belief. For example, the call to prayer given by Moses to the Hebrews in the wilderness was, 'Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God the Lord is One'. In the original Hebrew this is, 'Shema Ysrael, Adonai Eloheinu Adonai Ehad'. 'Adonai' is 'Our Lord', the word 'Elohainu' for 'God', like the word 'council', is a collective noun which operates as a singular. God is the Creator and God's spirit, or breath (ruach) moves in the world such that effects can be seen, heard, felt.

Jesus believed so devoutly in God the Father who loves his people, his children, that he lived and breathed the same steadfast love. It was the different understandings of the early Church of the nature of the extraordinary Jesus that brought the Council of Nicaea together. The Roman Emperor, Constantine, convened the Council of Christian bishops, and philosophers in 325 A.D. at Nicaea (now Izbik in Turkey) to hammer out, in robust debate, what would be our Christian fundamental belief about God. The Nicene Creed, the shorter Apostles' Creed, and the longer Athanasian Creed agree that God is a Trinity.

God the Holy Trinity

Some have thought of God the three in One as like a triangle, some as like the leaf of a shamrock (a 'three-leafed clover'). They are static images, though, aren't they? There is no room for change and movement. They just are. Or as is popular to say, 'It is what it is'.

A more recent concept is that God is like 'I' and 'Thou', two distinct persons each with their own life, in a close and loving relationship, who together produce and can say of themselves 'We'. This relationship of love is attractive, it attracts us to it, yet no matter how many of us are caught up in the love that flows between the 'I' and 'Thou', the Godhead remains 'We', that is, still a Trinity.

Anyone who has been married for some time, anyone who is part of a family, anyone who is part of a church community knows that when we're part of a web of relationships we learn, we change, we initiate, we react, we respond. We also know that we all live in relation to each other, to animals, the earth, to objects, to everything that is. All relationships may change us but the love of God transforms us.

In the gospels, we read of the great love that Jesus felt coming from God, whom he called Father, and the great love that Jesus gave to God. When we read of that love, we remember the first commandment given to Moses on Mount Sinai: You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your mind, and with all your strength and with all your soul. Jesus did it. And he said, the second most important commandment is like it: You shall love your neighbour as yourself. Jesus did it.

From him, we understand how to respond to the love God our Creator has for us, how to love God the Creator as we ought. We love Christ for bringing us that salvation. We love the Holy Spirit who moves us, transforms us, strengthens us, confronts us, speaks for us, empowers us with spiritual gifts; inner guide, counsellor, comforter, and energiser. The one to whom we listen in the companionable silence of contemplative prayer/meditation. The one who helps us read our scriptures anew keeping pace with our spiritual development and understanding, and who helps us to pray with loving awareness of self and others.

Conclusion

To love God with one's whole heart means to say a wholehearted 'Yes' to life; to accept without reservation all that God wants us to fulfil; to have

the attitude that Jesus had when he said, "Not my will, but yours be done". This is to be born of the Spirit, born anew.

To love God totally is something like Dag Hammarsjold's words:
'For all that has been, Thanks.
To all that shall be, Yes.'

