

Prayer of Preparation

Did you know we read some of the same scriptures each year on Trinity Sunday? Even though we have a three-year reading cycle, there are some special Sundays which have dedicated readings. Trinity Sunday is one of them. You're probably asking why this is important...hold on, I'll let you know.

Today's scriptures are all about praising God. In fact, even though we read them, they are actually hymns...songs of praise to God of heaven and God of earth...God who created time and God who lived in time...God who redeems us and God who leads us. Today is the day we celebrate the entirety of God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Here's what Trinity Sunday is **not** about: Trinity Sunday is **not about** explaining the Trinity. We cannot explain God. We will never be able to describe God and God's goodness; we will never be able to describe God's grace, and we certainly will never be able to describe God's mercy.

Genesis begins with creating God the maker of heaven and earth. This same God, who when finished creating, looked around and called us "good." Genesis also calls God our sustainer...if you don't believe me, ask Abram as he wandered through the wilderness looking for the promised land. And God is provider... ask Hagar who when she and Ishmael were going to die of thirst, called out to God who heard her and sent an angel to provide water. Or, if I haven't convinced you, remember God who told Moses that when the people asked for his name, tell them that "I Am That I Am" sent you.

The Hebrew scriptures have over 100 names for God and each name tells us who God is...but none of them come close to describing God. That's because each name describes how each person or group of people experienced God in a certain context. But those names do not tell us the very depth and breathe of God.

Ohhhhhh, and there's more...there's so much more to the Holy Triune God we worship each Sunday morning. There's Jesus, Emmanuel, God with us. Jesus who is healer, teacher, preacher, salvation, and restorer. We read a gospel lesson each week on purpose...that purpose is to tell us who Jesus is and what Jesus wants us to do. Jesus, the very image of God, who dwelled with us as a living testimony that God does hear us, God will always hear us, salvation is at hand, and that love is the very core of who God is and what God wants us to do.

Yet, even with all of this, there are over 200 names and titles for Jesus and each one is a representation of who Jesus is to a people at certain times and under certain circumstances in their lives. Personally, I will always stand on Jesus being bread for the hungry, water for the thirsty, and a rock in a weary land but in this season of my life...well, Jesus is.

Did you know that in seminary, we poor potential pastors are asked to study who the Trinity are and how the understanding of the Trinity evolved over time. So there I am, looking at my poor exam after my professor has explained the scriptural and historical Trinity throughout time. The question staring at me: who do **I** say Jesus is?

This is an important question that each of us must answer, as a congregation and as individuals. Who do we say Jesus is and what are we going to do about it. My answer...Jesus is. Jesus is. That's a hymn of praise all by itself...Jesus is. There is no limit to who Jesus is, there is no limit to the love and mercy and grace Jesus pours out on us and there is no way for me to answer that question other than to say...Jesus is. To this very day, I do not have the worlds to describe all of Jesus because the words do not exist. So, I'll just say that in this season of my life, Jesus is the author and perfecter of my faith.

You know faith...the faith that is the assurance of things hoped for, and the conviction of things not seen. As we enter a new season of pastoral appointments, it's Jesus, the author and perfecter of my faith, that I lean on and into because when we forget where our faith is from, we as pastors and as a people, go astray.

Our hymns of praise for Trinity Sunday are also about our leader, our guide, and our comforter. I think it is significant to note that we begin this season with Pentecost Sunday, with Jesus telling us that the Holy Spirit is coming to lead, to guide, and to comfort us. It's easy to see the Spirit as being contained in the day of Pentecost but the Spirit first appears in Genesis as the wind from God who sweeps over the face of the waters.

The Spirit is the wind that blows the apostles out of the upper room, *and* the dove that descends from heaven, *and* tongues of fire that dance above the apostles' heads, *and* God's anointing, and *so* much more. I found a book with the names, titles, and roles of the Holy Spirit. It's 145 pages long yet we rarely talk about the role of the Spirit in our lives and in the life of the church.

And we don't name the Holy Spirit moments when we encounter them. It's a shame...we are guided by God's Spirit here in the world. Every step we take, every move we make as a congregation is in step with the Spirit's presence in us and among us. Wisdom...Holy Spirit wisdom. That's the best I can come up with. How do they work together? How are they the Holy Triune God? How are we to address them? I have a few suggestions you may have over the past few weeks:

- Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,
- Alpha and Omega,
- A rock in a weary land,
- Water to the thirsty, bread to the hungry, and clothes to the naked,
- Bright and morning star,
- Leader, guide, and comforter.

And, transformer. That's me though...I made that one up; don't tell anyone. Transformer because we don't change on our own, it's the work of the Triune God within us. Transformer because I'm not who I used to be and God is still working on my rough edges. Transformer because God needs us to have a new walk and a new talk in the world. Transformer because as we have been transformed, God requires us to transform the world into God's own image.

Response to the Word: *Almighty God, you come to us as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, having given us the gift of your presence in our lives and hearts. Now give us the grace to love you with our minds as fully as we ought. Cast aside in us our too simplistic views of your majesty and power. Stir up in us a fresh awareness of the richness of your being, the worldwide diversity of your work and the wide wonder of your love, that we might perfectly love you in order to more faithfully serve you all our days. Amen.*