

Sermon – TRINITY SUNDAY A (June 7 2020) – Pastor Peter

Our God has created us to be in relationship with him and with humanity

(Genesis 1:1 – 2:4a; Psalm 8; 2 Corinthians 13:11-14; Matthew 28:16-20)

2 Corinthians 14:14 'May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.'

On Trinity Sunday you might expect to hear a sermon trying to explain the nature of God; who being one God is spoken of in 3 persons. But this is a mystery, beyond human comprehension. We know that scripture refers to the different persons of God.

Our two NT readings made these very references: Matthew 28:19 '...go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.'

2 Corinthians 13:14 'May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.'

And while the central confession of the Jews declares that God is one, 'Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, The Lord is one' (*Deuteronomy 6:4*), the opening chapter of the first book of the Bible (*Gen 1:1ff*) seems to imply that God is more than one. "Then God said, 'Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness...' (v26). This is often explained that God the Father who spoke the world into being "Let there be..." accomplished this by speaking his Word. Jesus is referred to as 'The Word' in John's gospel account (*see John 1:1 and Colossians 1:16*). When the word is spoken the very breath of God [his Spirit] is also present (*Ruach – the Hebrew word for spirit also means breath or wind*).

But that's enough about trying to understand God as three, yet God as one. As I said at the beginning, this is a mystery.

What I do want to focus on with you however, is that these very names which we used for God, are all about relationships.

You see our God is not a distant god who is uninterested in this tiny insignificant blue/green planet which is undistinguishable in the vast galaxies of the universe. On the contrary, God who made us is so interested in us that he hasn't allowed for us to destroy each other by our warring and animosity and competitiveness towards each other. Rather, he came into this world in the person of Jesus, The Christ, to intervene and to rescue us from our self-destructive sinful selfishness.

That's what you do when you are in a caring relationship with someone. You come close to them and you do whatever you can to help!

The Apostolic blessing that is recorded by Saint Paul at the end of his second letter to the Corinthians picks up this very notion. He writes that, in Jesus, God gives us grace; as Father, God gives us love; and as Spirit, God gives us community/fellowship. And it's these relational attributes of God that I want to focus on with you in our mediation.

God is a God of relationships. He created us differently from the rest of creation, for a personal relationship with him. In Genesis 1 we read that God spoke into being the planets and stars, the mountains and oceans, the birds, fish and animals. While in Genesis Chapter 2 we hear the detailed story of how man was carefully and lovingly crafted out of the dust of the earth, and woman crafted out of man, and how God breathed life into them in a personal and intimate way.

It's Psalm 8 that begs the question, 'Who are we human beings that God should be so mindful of us, that He should care so much for us?' 'What are we that God should create us next only to the angels, reflecting His divine glory and honour, and allowing us to rule over the rest of creation with Him?'

Love is the simple answer! Because God is a God of love, who loves to be in a relationship with us, he has revealed himself to us as Father. This was the name Jesus used to teach his disciples how they should pray to God. After his resurrection he instructed Mary to go and tell the disciples "**I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.**" (*John 20:17b*)

To know God as Father is to know him as a loving and intimate God. Father is a title that other religions don't use. Other religions need to call out to their god, trying to awaken him or bring him close to them, because they see their god as distant or disengaged. But Christians know that God in his desire to have a relationship with us, has come close to us. And so we quietly and lovingly call him Father as an expression of one who is warm and welcoming and inviting; and who is constantly available to help us and to care for and nurture us in our need.

And because God is about relationships, he doesn't need to wait to be invited to help us. As Psalm 139 reminds us **'Before a word is on my tongue you, Lord, know it completely.'** This is the very nature of a loving and intimate relational God. In His concern for his relationship with us God has poured out his grace to us in the person of Jesus!

Because we could not ask him while we were still lost in our sin and a long way from Him, God came close to us - to help us and save us. He broke into our world of limited time and space, and took on our human flesh so that he might save us from our sin (our disobedience and rebellion). He embraced our human condition so that he could die in our place, and give to us the free gift of new and eternal life. We call this gift grace. It's not something we merit or earn, but it is something that a personal and loving and relational God gives to us. God does all this so that we can once again be in fellowship with Him. And to share in fellowship with the community of other believers in Jesus.

Jesus prayed to God before he was arrested and taken away to be crucified, **'I pray also for those who will believe in me..., that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me.'** (*John 17:20-21*)

This fellowship with God and with fellow believers in Christ, comes through the gift of the Holy Spirit – the Spirit of God, the Spirit of Jesus (*Romans 8:9-11*) – who lives in us and guides us in the truth of God's word (*John 14:16-17,27; 16:8-11,13*). We know that we have the Spirit of God, because no one can call Jesus the 'Lord' of their life if they don't have the Spirit. And no-one who curses Jesus or speaks against him can have the Spirit of God. (*1Corinthians 12:3*)

The Spirit of God living in us helps us to know the relationship we have with our loving and gracious God. He's the one who helps us to pray even when we're lost for words (*Romans 8:26-27*); He's the one who holds us in faith even when we find ourselves doubting; He's the one who helps us to recall all the beautiful and caring things that Jesus has taught us.

God doesn't reveal himself as three in one to be a theological conundrum. But he reveals himself as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit to reveal himself as a caring and personable God who is in a loving relationship with us for eternity. That's why we don't refer to him as Creator, Redeemer and Sanctifier which are his functions, but we refer to him by his personal qualities – as the loving and compassionate Father, as the gracious and merciful Son, and as the comforting and guiding Holy Spirit. Amen.