

TRINITY SUNDAY

RECOLLECTING OURSELVES FOR WORSHIP

Music (please use this time for quiet and reflection)

Gong [followed by silence]

Call to Worship – Nicene Creed

Hymn – 138 [Holy! Holy! Holy! Lord God Almighty!]

Opening Prayer

OUR HUMANNES AND GOD'S GRACE

Call to Confession

Unison Prayer of Confession

Gracious God, the image I have of you was formed when I was a child; it reflects the needs I had at that time. I could do very little, so you could do anything and everything. I knew little, so you knew everything. I could not make plans, but there was your plan and you were implementing it. I have grown older and become more capable, but my image of you and what you do has not altered. I have relegated you to some place in my mind that I rarely visit and therefore my image of you is only slightly related to the world in which I currently live. Because of this, you have become functionally irrelevant to my life; a comfort onto which I grab when life is stressful and I am at a loss, but not a resource that assists me constantly. I need a concept of you that locates you in the center of my everyday life where you do not do things for me but with me. I need a concept of you that does not encourage me to retreat from life but encourages me to engage what my life brings me. I need a concept of you that is not based on moralizing but on thinking. Make me dissatisfied with any efforts to retreat to the god of my childhood. Incite a passion in me to relate with you as God of my adulthood.

Personal Prayer of Confession in Silence

Assurance of Pardon

LISTENING FOR THE WORD OF GOD

Story for the Children

Scripture – John 16:12-15

Prompting

Silence and Reflection

RESPONDING TO THE WORD OF GOD

Hymn – 139 [Come, Thou Almighty King]

Announcements

Minute for Mission

Our Gifts and Offerings

Praise God from whom all blessings flow;

Praise Christ all creatures here below;

Praise Holy Spirit, Comforter;

One God, Triune, whom we adore. Amen.

The Prayers of the People and Lord's Prayer

Our Father in heaven,

hallowed be your name,

your kingdom come,

your will be done,

on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us today our daily bread.

Forgive us our sins

as we forgive those who sin against us.

Save us in the time of trial

and deliver us from evil.

For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours

now and forever. Amen.

GOING OUT – to serve, to journey, to live the word

Hymn – 459 [Father, We Praise Thee]

Charge and Benediction

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

TODAY	10:00	Worship and Church School
	11:00	Coffee and Fellowship
	11:20	Lunch
MONDAY	1:00	Centering Prayer, church office

Lectionary Readings from Cycle C for June 23, 2019
I Kings 19:1-4 (5-7) 8-15a; Psalm 42 and 43;
Galatians 3:23-29; Luke 8:26-39.

F.Y.I.

Our musician is Erin Garcia-Norris.

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Trinity Sunday (John 16:12-15)

The Trinity is the central doctrine in the Christian religion. Even so, it has always been a source of confusion and contention. It was conceived in an attempt to resolve conflicts in the early church, took the greater part of the 4th century to write, and in the end did not succeed in unifying the entire Christian church, even to this day.

The Trinity states that there is “one God who exists in three persons.” If that language was helpful and clarifying in the 4th century, it no longer is so in the 21st century. In our hearing, the language lends itself to the idea that there are three gods, and that they exist as objective entities. What is lost to our ears is the understanding that God is one activity, that of bringing us the fullness of our life, which can be viewed or organized in three different ways, all three ways together giving us a complete picture of how God interacts with us.

The human mind in the 21st century is not identical to the human mind that existed in the 4th century. The distinction between the subjective and objective worlds is much more differentiated for us in the 21st century than it was in the 4th century. The words “poor” or “rich,” for example, would have referred primarily if not entirely to objective circumstances in the 4th century, whereas for us the words could apply equally to both objective and subjective circumstances. This gives us an opportunity to talk about God in a way not easily or entirely available in the 4th century, by using the language of subjectivity and interiority.

I suggest we use the language of subjectivity and interiority to talk about what the concept of “one God in three persons” means in the 21st century. It would make more sense to us to say that God is an activity which we can view in three different ways, which sees the distinctions delineated in the Trinity not as attributes of God but as attributes of our consciousness. What the Trinity describes are different ways we can learn to focus when we think of God, where each way of focusing organizes the activity which God is in a different way, for emphasis. One way puts the focus on the how God creates and uses our cognition to help us put a life together. A second way puts the focus on how God uses that cognition to correct the image of our life which we have assembled. A third way puts the focus on how God uses that cognition to help us assimilate and integrate those corrections so that our life ends up being more congruent and better balanced.

[Jim Robie, 6-14-19]

Trinity Sunday – John 16:12-15

The Trinity is a doctrine of the Christian religion. It was crafted through a protracted series of debates in the fourth century. I suggest that underneath all its theological language, the Trinity is a statement about a way to view God. I am not saying that “how to view God” is what they were discussing, but that “how to view God” was the issue that was underlying the subjects they were debating. The elements used in constructing the doctrine are found in the books of the New Testament, however the doctrine itself is not found there, nor is the way of seeing God it proposes. Even though the Trinity has become one of the most confusing things in Christianity, I believe the intent of its authors was to simplify and focus the way we look at God and look for God. For some reason the human mind tends to think of God in terms of “metaphysics,” an entire system of thought which explains everything in life. I suggest that the Trinity is something very different, and is not at all about metaphysics, but is an attempt to help us focus on God as a reality that interacts with us, and interacts with us for the particular purpose of our having a human life, the fullest human life possible for us. All the speculation we do about the nature of God may be interesting and even entertaining; but, it is not important. What is important is what we see when we view God in the way the Trinity portrays God.

The word God is a noun, and as a noun it encourages us to think of God as a “being.” However, it is more accurate to think of the word God as a verb, which would encourage us to think of God as an action or activity. The Trinity looks at the activity which God is as having three different yet related aspects [in the Nicene Creed these aspects are referred to as “Persons”]. That is, there are three ways that the activity which God is can be viewed by our minds and organized in our understanding. The Trinity does not say that God is three different activities, but that God is one activity, which can be viewed and understood from three different points of view. Each point of view is a way of organizing or clustering the activity which God is in order to highlight certain facets of that activity and emphasize those facets. Think of the Trinity as a set of lenses through which we can look at the way God interacts with us, each

of which isolates and helps us focus on certain activities which are always occurring. The Trinity functions like a reminder that these activities are the important things to focus on in order to see God and what God is doing.

One way to organize what God is/does is to view God as “Father” [which is the way the First Person of the Trinity is described in the Nicene Creed]. This is not a useful label for us to use for this way of viewing God because we have issues around gender, legitimate issues, which did not press upon people in the 4th century. If we remember that we are trying to describe an activity which God is, I suggest we use the idea of “parenting,” a category which includes both masculine and feminine attributes, which we can use to help us focus on how God acts toward us. Examples of how God parents us would include, but not be limited to, nurturing, supporting, guiding, encouraging, accepting, loving, forgiving, etc. Parenting, in the best sense of that word, is something God does with us all the time, and is the primary way God interacts with us. For us to perceive this we would need to have the capacity for both self-awareness and self-reflection. As we become aware of our life and reflect on it, the Trinity would propose that if we look for it, we will find that there is something within us that is always on our side and parenting us as described above. In the middle of everything that goes on in our life, there is something that sustains our life through the internal processes that operate within us all the time. The processes through which we receive nurture, support, guidance, encouragement, love, forgiveness, assistance, etc. are what we label “cognitive abilities.” Examples would be awareness, perception, reasoning, intuition, feeling, thinking, judgment, knowing, etc. When we look through the lens of the First Person of the Trinity it is these parenting activities/cognitive abilities which are highlighted.

However, sometimes it is not possible for us to see God’s parenting at work in our lives, let alone make use of it, because we are somehow trapped in our life by not being able to feel something, think about it, or even see it. When this is the case, the Trinity offers us two additional ways of looking at God which give us

other perspectives on what God does with us, and by doing so helps us focus on them.

A second way to organize what God is/does is to view God as “Son” [which is the way the Second Person of the Trinity is described in the Nicene Creed], also “...Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God.” When we look at God in this way we are focused on the activity of “redemption,” the work of recovering the ownership of something that has been lost. When we are trapped in life it is because our ability to engage our life is obstructed by something that is at work in us yet is lost to us, like a conflict that is out of our awareness. The activity we are helped to focus on when we view God as “Son” is that of there being introduced into our awareness things about us that are true of us yet are not in our awareness, e. g. thoughts and feelings which are in us yet are not known by or welcomed by us. With the assistance of God, thoughts, feelings, memories, insights, perceptions, etc. intrude into our awareness seeking our attention. If these are unwelcome, we remove them. God, when viewed as “Son,” then returns them to awareness at a later time, and does this repeatedly until what we need to know or feel finally sticks long enough for us to consider it. For example, we may be troubled and not know it, and then find that “feeling troubled” begins to appear in our awareness. We may not know why we are troubled, we may only know that we do not like the experience, and so we work to dismiss it from our awareness, and succeed, only to have the feeling returned to awareness again. We are not doing this, in the sense that we do not bring the feeling to awareness nor return it to awareness, yet something within us is working to introduce us to what is true of us. These disclosures often come in the middle of our being focused on something else. They tend to be feelings and thoughts towards which we are not all that welcoming, and generally are dismissed by us as mere mind-chatter. Yet, when we view God as “Son,” this activity of “redeeming” different aspects of our life is what we are helped to focus on.

A third way to organize what God is/does is to view God as “Holy Spirit” [which is the way the Third Person of the Trinity is described in the Nicene Creed]. When we view God in this way, we

notice that what has entered our awareness is “sustained” there, in that it becomes something we can call to mind and consider and explore. We also notice that the mental work needed to integrate what we now know begins and continues even when we are not intent on doing that work. It is like something within us “advocates” for what has entered our awareness, “helps” us explore and unpack what has been disclosed, and does this until what is new to us becomes integrated as part of our self-understanding and we are able to use it in our daily living. This internal activity of “mulling things over, pondering them, exploring them, cooking them, trying them on for size, living with them, considering them” is what we are helped to focus on when we look at God through the lens of the Third Person of the Trinity.

If we combine the three aspects of God accentuated in the Trinity, they together depict the activity by which God brings us the fullness of our life, and thereby expands our experience of the person we are, making our experience of ourselves more encompassing.

Most people grow up and learn to see God through the lens of the First Person of the Trinity. Our idea of “parenting” usually starts by being heavily judgmental and moralistic. If the Christian religion works for us at all, we transition to a more adequate and accurate understanding of God’s parenting, one that is compassionate and humane. However, the Trinity is describing an experience of God that lies beyond this transition from God as judging to God as compassionate. What the Trinity describes is built on the experience of God parenting us with compassion and mercy, but then it introduces us to seeing God as doing the work of incorporating what in our time and thought-world we would call our “shadow,” the inclusion in our consciousness of material that lies in our unconscious. Viewing God from the perspective of the Second and Third Persons of the Trinity allows us to glimpse this work as it goes on in us continuously. Viewing God in all three ways gives us a complete picture of how God works our redemption [the recovery of what has been lost to us] and ultimately our salvation [keeping us safe from wearing out by the effort we make to be who we believe we should be by keeping hidden what is actually true of us].

[Jim Robie, 6-14-19, Trinity, Cycle C, John 16:12-15]