

## The Holy Trinity - 2014

The trouble with Christianity is that so much of it is a beautiful mystery. What or who is God? How does God become man? How does the Spirit really work in us? How are the Father, Son and Holy Spirit three and yet one? The truth is we don't know. We can get an idea, from the scriptures, from the world, from the reflections of prayerful and learned individuals, but fundamentally it is a mystery. We know the Trinity is real and yet it is beyond the reality that we hear and see. We know it exists and yet it is beyond existence and time.

When I was a child, I can remember joining my parents on a large family trip out to the cinema to watch Crocodile Dundee. There were cousins, uncles, aunties not to mention my big brother. I wasn't originally supposed to be going, but I made such a fuss that they decided to take me along. 'After all', I said, 'I am big enough, grown-up enough, mature enough'. I remember my dad saying to my mother, 'let him come, all of the inappropriate stuff will go over his head anyway'.

As I sat there, I was able to follow the storyline and found some of it really quite funny, but the jokes that got the entire audience rolling around the isles went completely over my head. I laughed along with everyone else, for I desperately wanted to be inside the circle, I desperately wanted to be a grown up so that I could delight in the moment as much as the adults obviously were, but deep down I was just a little confused.

As Christians we need to remember that we are all like the child growing up. We often think we are older than we really are. We think we have the answers, here and now. But every so often we are hit with a realisation that we aren't as grown-up as we thought we were. That's because none of us are. Let me explain...

My dad took an interest in me and recognised that it might be the right time to reveal a little more of adult life to me. Just as a child gets a glimpse of adult life by the attention adults pay to them, so too we get a little glimpse of what divine life is by the attention God pays to us. That interest in us; that care and attention, is the whole story of the bible. From our creation as humankind through to the sending of God's Son as one of us, his dying for us, his resurrection and the sending of the Holy Spirit of love and joy.

What do we glimpse of divinity from all this? Well First, we see that the God who creates, is also the God who loves – so much so that he sends his Son to us. A Son who then dies for us. Don't be fooled, however, God does not do this to satisfy himself: he certainly doesn't send His son to die. God does not kill Jesus, we do that. The world we create is the killer.

God the Father then, is the eternal parent. He is the Father, but he is quite unlike any father we can imagine. The best possible father in the world could not come close. Times it by 100 and we still would be no-where near. God is infinitely Father material who expresses a love that is infinite and eternal too.

Second, God as Son becomes human to engage, interact and show us the way, but he is not just a good example. Jesus the Son is only able to achieve our salvation because of his obedience to the will of the Father. Time and again he is presented with a way out, but he does not take it. He resists the devil who tempts him in the desert, he does not judge those who are judging Him, he does not flee or even resist the terrible time of trial and death – even though he could. All this because of his obedience to the Father and the Father's mission.

Third, It is exactly this obedience to the will of the Father – his submissiveness, his ability to live a life as God had always intended it; his purity that allows him to be resurrected and join the Father in

eternal joy, but also allows for this eternal joy to spill over to his brothers and sisters, the Apostles, and enables them to build His church. A church we continue today in a direct line with our modern day Apostles, our bishops and priests. This is the sending of the Holy Spirit.

From eternity God reveals himself to be the loving parent. His image is revealed perfectly in the child. This is represented to us by the coming of Jesus, the Son of God. A coming in poverty, weakness and peril (Because that is the world we have made). This is the celebration of Christmas.

From eternity God steps forth as the child. Completely dependent upon the Father for his entire being. Coming forward from the Father, he becomes known on earth through his loving obedience. An obedience that leads to betrayal, suffering, torture and death (because that is the world we have made). This is our celebration of Holy Week and Easter.

From eternity God breathes his joy into the world, his own Son. The perfect image of the Father and yet perfectly human. Jesus is the flawless reproduction of the divine life. From him comes the outpouring of the Spirit. A Spirit of joy and peace, but also of struggle against all evil; against prejudice, injustice, turmoil, malicious intent (because this is the world we have made). This is our celebration of Pentecost.

This is the life we see in God. This is the life we look forward to sharing more fully in. Just like a child sitting in the cinema desperately longing to enter that level of adult understanding where they feel completely taken into the circle of adult life, so we get glimpses through the Father, Son and Holy Spirit of the life where we are ultimately destined to: Unimaginable love.

Our prayer and worship, then, has no substance if it doesn't hold, at its core, attempts to move us closer into the life we glimpse through the Trinity: the Father, Son and Holy Spirit together. This is why what we say and do in the worship space is so very important. This is why the words we use and the way we do things matters. Get it wrong and we no longer glimpse elements of that complete love only found through the Father, Son and Holy Spirit together. We must not try and divide them up for our gratification, for they are all completely interdependent and inseparable. To do so is to wilfully attempt to sever the eternal bond that unites them.

We must not crave the kind of worship experience that comes from only worshipping the Spirit or the kind of self-reassurance and misplaced certainty that comes from only worshipping the Son or the kind of spiritual elevation that comes from only worshipping the Father. Only together do they reveal more of the divine life to us. This is why for the Church of England, the Eucharist is so central to what we do. Take the time to really think about what we say and do in the Eucharist and we realise that in it we relocate ourselves with the work of the Father, the obedience of the Son and the continuing influence of the Spirit, through the sharing of God's gifts of bread, wine, fellowship, scripture, prayer, compassion; LOVE – all the things we receive through the Father, Son and Holy Spirit: the Holy Spirit

It does not matter that we do not fully understand it. It does not matter that we only see hints and glimpses of it through the bible and especially the life of Jesus. It does not matter that we cannot fully imagine what it may be like. All that matters is that God the Father, is at this moment through His Son sending the Holy Spirit so that we may ourselves live in peace and joy for eternity.

***R.T.Parker-McGee 2015***