

Experiencing the Trinity – Joining the Trinity

Chalcedonian Creed

I. Introduction

The outline for this sermon series has been based on a book by Darrell W. Johnson called *Experiencing the Trinity*.

The living God is not a solitary God. The living God is not an isolated God. From all eternity the living God has lived in relationship—indeed, has lived as relationship. At the center of the universe is relationship. From all eternity the living God has been community, family. From all eternity the living God has been infinitely pleased as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. (Darrell W. Johnson, *Experiencing the Trinity* [Kindle Locations 779-782]).

This by itself is quite an amazing statement, but what I find just as mind blowing is the idea that this eternal triune God beckons to us to enter this eternal relationship of joy and fellowship.

Thomas Torrance said it this way: “God has opened himself to us in such a way that we may know him in the inner relations of his Divine Being, and have communion with him in his divine life as Father, Son and Holy Spirit.” Through the reconciliation that God has worked out in Jesus Christ, God “has established an intimate two-way relation between himself and us and us and himself, making himself accessible to us and giving us entry into the inner fellowship of God’s life.” (Thomas F. Torrance, *Trinitarian Perspectives: Toward Doctrinal Agreement*, p. 1.)

To be honest, I have difficulty grasping what that really looks like. Something in me knows that this truth can drastically change my life, but I feel far from having responded fully to this reality.

II. Joining the Trinity

But when the fullness of time had come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, 5 in order to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as children. 6 And because you are children, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!" (Galatians 4:4-6, NRSV)

We declare to you what was from the beginning...concerning the word of life — 2 this life was revealed, and we have seen it and testify to it, and declare to you the eternal life that was with the Father and was revealed to us — 3 we declare to you what we have seen and heard so that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. (1 John 1:1-3, NRSV)

Our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ! We have been invited into an intimacy of relationship that is beyond our wildest imaginations!

The Bible says that “God is love” (1 John 4:8). Love implies relationship. The mystery is that long before any human being came into the picture God was already love. God had already existed as a community of love. The Father loved the Son, the Son loved the Father, and the love between the Father and the Son was embodied in the Spirit.

And here is the Gospel: The God who is love draws near to me, a sinful, mere mortal, to draw me within the circle of Lover, Beloved and Love itself. We become co-lovers with God! It is the very reason for our existence!

In thinking of ourselves as co-lovers with God, Darrell W. Johnson mentions three ways that we live this out.

A. We are co-lovers with God of God.

You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. 38 This is the greatest and first commandment. (Matthew 22:37-38, NRSV)

But in our understanding of God as Trinity, we don't just know and love God as some nebulous spirit in the sky. We know and love God as Father, Son and Spirit, each with distinctions of personality and functions.

Not only are we invited to love God, but we are invited to love each person of the Trinity with the love of the other persons of the Trinity.

The Father really loves the Son—an understatement. The Son has been and always will be the Father's great delight.

"This is my beloved Son with whom I am well pleased." (Matthew 3:17)

I love Jesus Christ the Son, but my love is so puny, especially compared to the Father's love for Jesus.

And the Son really loves the Father—another understatement. This is the secret of Jesus' existence, the driving force of His ministry.

And the Son draws near to me to draw me to Himself so I can love the Father the way He does.

And the Spirit? The Spirit is totally taken up with the goodness and beauty of the Son and the Father.

And the Spirit falls upon us—a bit stronger than draws near— so we can be ravaged with the Spirit's love for the Son and Father.

The Spirit comes upon us to fill us with the same passion to see the Father and Son glorified. The Spirit gives us entry into the inter-Trinitarian delight.

Co-lovers with God of God—this is what worship is all about.

B. We are co-lovers with God of one another.

Beloved, let us love one another, because love is from God; everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. 8 Whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love. (1 John 4:7-8, NRSV)

As we are drawn into the inner knowing of the Trinity together. How can we but love one another?

As we are engaged in fellowship with the triune God – the very essence and expression of eternal love – our hearts are transformed and filled with the love of God.

It is this love that moves us to love one another.

On my own, it can be difficult for me to love you, but my relationship is not just with you, it is with you and with the Trinity.

I can love you by joining with the Trinity and love you as the Trinity loves you. You can love me by joining the Trinity in loving me.

That is, I am to see the triune God loving you and join God in loving you. Co-lovers with Him. Co-lovers of one another!

C. We are co-lovers with God of the world.

The closer we interact with God, the more we will gain God's heart for the world.

For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life. (John 3:16, NRSV)

God's heart is for our neighbor and for all those who have not entered the love of God.

As we see how much God loves all of creation, how can we not also extend that love to the lost, the hurting and the broken?

How can we not care for and steward the created order?

Those who are co-lovers of God have for centuries given their lives that others around the world might know the love of God.

What did Paul say? *For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. 15 And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again. (2 Corinthians 5:14-15, NIV)*

What did the love of God compel Paul to do? To share the Gospel with as many as possible!

We are co-lovers with God of the world.

III. Conclusion

Worship, community, mission, or as we say, love God, love people, serve joyfully, cannot be separated, because they are grounded in the Trinity.

Co-lovers with God of God—worship.

Co-lovers with God of one another—community.

Co-lovers with God of the world—mission.

The living God is not a solitary God. The living God is not an isolated God. The living God is a relationship, a community, a Trinity.

And this God draws near to us to draw us near to Himself within the circle of His knowing and loving of Himself.

It is being included in the eternal life of God that heals all wounds and allows us to stop demanding satisfaction. What really matters, of a personal nature, once it is clear that you are included? You have been chosen. God chose you. This is the message of the Kingdom. (Dallas Willard, *The Divine Conspiracy: Rediscovering Our Hidden Life*, p. 341)