

*Prayer: Gracious God, as we take in the stories of creation, help us to find the places where creation and re-creation call your love to us. Help us to move with the rhythm of your creation, so that in our care we may find that it is, indeed, good. Amen.*

"To paraphrase G.K Chesterton: human knowledge tries to make everything clear and ends up making everything murky; faith allows one thing to be a mystery and everything becomes clear."

Today is Trinity Sunday – the only Sunday in the Church calendar that is dedicated to a doctrinal position! The "Trinity" as a doctrine and in theology is a Church construct. Some scholars (J Petty) say it has been perhaps the most controversial and most mysterious of Christian teachings. It is a fact that the word "trinity" does not appear in the Bible. What we have are hints of trinitarianism beginning to develop, like Matthew's mention of the trinitarian name in today's passage. Or for example certain passages of Paul, such as "the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you (2 Cor 13: 14)."

As a first century Jew, Matthew would have been a monotheist. Petty comments that: "In fact, at the time of Jesus, Jews were the first and only monotheists in the world." "Hear O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is One," said the *shema*." And yet as Petty continues: "the earliest Christians, **all of them Jews**, believed that, somehow, they had encountered God in Jesus of Nazareth. How could one express that, and still be a monotheist?"

The most challenging theological treatises--over the years, and to this day--have been on the trinity. It took St. Augustine 15 volumes to describe the trinity. Here are his seven summary statements: The Father is God. The Son is God. The Holy Spirit is God. The Son is not the Father. The Father is not the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is not the Son. There is only one God.

As G. K. Chesterton said: 'human knowledge tries to make everything clear and ends up making everything murky;' or impenetrable, and convoluted, but what should we expect? The subject is God, after all. And if we follow the paraphrase through – it is faith which allows one thing to be a mystery and everything becomes clear.

We know – we experience, we have seen for ourselves how in our created world 'one' can be three e.g. Rain + Steam + Ice = water. Why must we make the three: Creator, Redeemer, Comforter difficult – or even an impossibility? J Petty has three points to make in favour of the Trinity!

1. "The trinity's central teaching about God is that God--in God's interior life--is essentially relational. The trinity understands that relationships within God are dynamic. They move. The early theologians used the word *peri-choresis*, which literally means "dancing around." (We get our word "choreography" from *choresis*.) This ever-vital, ever-moving, ever-interweaving of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost is essential--that is, an aspect of God's very being.

(2) The trinity is radically egalitarian, and embraces **all** of human experience. It is precisely the human man Jesus who is the Second Person of the Trinity. Through Jesus--not the souped-up, supernatural Jesus, but the human Jesus--the entirety of human experience is embraced and taken into the life of God. Just as God is relationship within God's own self, God relentlessly reaches out and into all human life to reconcile and restore human being's broken relationship with God. This is good.

(3) The trinity makes good sense of the cross. When Jesus died on the cross, he then descended into hell--into the realm of nothingness, absence, and annihilation. He descended into the "opposite of God." Where God is presence and relationship, hell is absence and loneliness--"where nothing connects with nothing," as someone has put it. According to trinitarian theology of the cross, the Holy

Spirit breaches the gap between the "Father in Heaven" and the "Son in Hell." The Holy Spirit is the bond of love that unites them even across this greatest of all chasms." This is good – right?

“Good – Loving” is what I titled today's sermon – the Trinity is held in place by love – good-love, into which we are called to take up our birth-right and belong. We can only experience this call, hear this invitation, experience the presence of God because of other people. Because other people experienced, heard, believed and baptised... And so exercising the authority Jesus gave to teach his commandments. Of course you realise his commandments were to love with a good love, teach and share it.

Of all the directions the scriptures for today pull me I want us to stay with the ‘Good – loving’ because we are asked to reflect on Genesis 1 today, it is one account of our beginning – not a detailed or scientific how of our beginning but a ‘when’ we began. When God began to sort our world and push the disorder of chaos to the fringe – to the outer edges of reality. When the Spirit hovered / brooded over the waters. When God got lonely and wanted company – then life began and it was good.

**It was good** – I really want to emphasise this because it is a contention of mine that in our church / faith / religious expressions – sharing doing what Jesus commanded us to do I believe we forget that our scriptures begin with the affirmation that in the beginning of all time – we were wanted – called into being for relationship by love and it was good.

Yes, bad stuff happens, scholars maintain this account came from a time in the Hebrew peoples history when they were oppressed and in exile in Babylon, and they needed to know / be reminded that God had all authority over all nations to the ends of the earth. And so in the beginning there was only God's Spirit brooding over the waters, bringing order, light, life **and it was good**.

In fact on day 6 in this account – there is a shift because H Wallace points out that “On day 6, however, God sees everything as ‘very good’, not as an expression of the level of self-satisfaction God has achieved, but as a statement that everything is **‘complete’**. Wallace continues: “At the end of the Genesis account, however, Israel's God rests, not as some reward for a job well done or after a hard week on the job, but as a sign of God's sovereignty over all. **Nothing** will challenge this God's authority. God has established order and nothing else can threaten that.

Human observance of Sabbath, modelled on God's own Sabbath, is a sign of God's sovereignty over creation – a sovereignty over destructive forces in the world, over other sources of ‘chaos’ and death in all its forms, and even over the hubris of humans who would seek through oppression, technology, business, military might, position in society, or even their own work to control all things around them, without and within. A celebration of creation is an invitation to see ourselves as creatures of a God who creates all things ‘good’ **and in whom** all things are held together.

We ought not to be misled and think that the 7th day is a day like others. There is no evening and morning, nor any other statement that makes it the same as other days. This 7th day in Genesis 2 is really a time beyond our time, a time toward which we look, when all creation will recognise the authority of the one who creates it, and rest in God's care.”

This creation account is open ended – it is not yet finished. Only when God is recognised as the source **and giver** of all life, where creatures find their rest from chaos and death in God and what we call the Kingdom of God or Heaven reaches its fullness. Until then the work of creation continues but we see how God's sovereignty is established fully in the work of the Son and Spirit.

In Matt 28:18, we are told that all authority is granted to the risen Christ who sends his disciples out to baptise in the name of the Father, Son and Spirit. The Godly work of creation continues. In the death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ and in the mission guiding activity of the Spirit, the gift of whom we celebrate at Pentecost, creation moves toward its ‘seventh day’. Trinity Sunday celebrates the unity of the work of God in the world – a creating, redeeming and life-giving work in which we are called to participate and lovingly share the good. Amen