

Trinity Sunday, Year A, 2023

Isaiah 40.12-17, 17-31; Psalm 8; 2 Corinthians 13.11-13; Matthew 26.16-20

Lord, may the words I speak, build up and not tear down that your name may be praised in all the earth and here. **Amen.**

The psalmist asks, 'What is man, that thou art mindful of him?' (KJV) In an updated English translation, 'What are humans that you are mindful of them, mortals that you care for them?' The psalmist's question arises out of a sustained contemplation of God's creation. When the psalmist considers God's heavens, the work of God's fingers, the moon and the stars, which God has set in place the Psalmist is moved to ask, 'What is man that thou art mindful of him?'

Over the last months new images of new planets and galaxies have been frequent in the electronic newspapers I read. The universe is still expanding at a rate that we as humans can put into numbers with the help of machines, but which we cannot truly comprehend, as our lives as the psalmist observes are only three score and ten and should we be so blessed four score.

The psalmist's question is the question of one who believes. 'What is man that thou art mindful of him?' What am I that you are mindful of me? Given all this glory, the glory of an ever expanding universe... Why God do you care about us? Why God do you care for us? Why God do you care for our well-being? Why God are you concerned that we may live life fully and abundantly? Why God are you concerned that we flourish, each one of us?

The prophet Isaiah's words remind us of the psalmist's words. In Isaiah 40:15 we read: 'Even the nations are like a drop from a bucket, and are accounted as dust on the scales; see, he takes up the isles like fine dust.' Other words remind us of the first

statements of both the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds, 'I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.' and 'We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen.' While the psalmist reminds of the necessity to be good stewards of all that God has entrusted to us.

Against the backdrop sketched above the Church today keeps Trinity Sunday reminding herself that God makes himself known as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The God whom we come to worship and adore is One. The God whom we proclaim is Triune. God is ever one, but God is also in and of (him)self relational. God is community. God is personal. One in three and three in one. The doctrine of the Trinity is given that we might not lose sight of God as one and as God as community in and of himself, a community of persons. A community of persons forever relating to one another in an unending movement of love of giving love and receiving love, love that is worthy of the name. Much that masquerades as love today is sentimental, but more worryingly selfish, manipulative, exploitative, ephemeral. Love is not to be confused with lust or narcissism or infatuation. The love of which we speak is a love that gives itself in the service of God and in the service of humanity not for selfish gain or self-interest, but rather informed by Christ's example. We must not suppose we can direct God, but we are to be directed by the spirit of the Lord. Or in some slightly altered words Hyacinth shared with me, 'In order to find the God who made humans, we have to stop following the god of our own making.'

On Sunday we celebrated the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost on those who were gathered in the Upper Room. And it is the outpouring of God's Holy Spirit that we are invited to now translate into our imagining of God as Triune. In our mind's eye for a fleeting moment only, we have a sense of the three persons of the Trinity each giving and receiving love in all fullness. God is. God is and God participates in a never ending circle in which love is being poured out, out of love on the other persons of the

Trinity. To safeguard us from thinking the persons are anyway divided and are but three, the Athanasian Creed posits such statements as,

And the (Catholick) Faith is this:

That we worship one God in Trinity, and Trinity in Unity;  
Neither confounding the Persons: nor dividing the Substance.  
For there is one Person of the Father, another of the Son:  
and another of the Holy Ghost.

But the Godhead of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, is all one:  
the Glory equal, the Majesty co-eternal.

Such as the Father is, such is the Son: and such is the Holy Ghost.

The Father uncreate, the Son uncreate: and the Holy Ghost uncreate.

The Father incomprehensible, the Son incomprehensible:  
and the Holy Ghost incomprehensible.

The Father eternal, the Son eternal: and the Holy Ghost eternal.

And yet they are not three eternal: but one eternal.

The Athanasian Creed has 42 lines in total ending with the Gloria Patri because our purpose is to glorify God. Glory be to the Father and to the Son: and to the Holy Ghost; as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be: world without end. Amen. The Creed carries us with it, as one phrase follows on another. The creed according to the Book of Common Prayer is to be said or sung at Morning and Evening prayer on a number of major feast days and some of the feasts of the apostles. I reference the Athanasian Creed this morning, because as we marvel, as we gaze in wonder at the vastness of God's creation and our place within it, we should also wonder and gaze at that which we are able with all caution and some trepidation to speak of God in Himself at all. Holy, holy, holy...

What can we say? The God whom we worship and adore desires to make himself known and God makes himself known through persons, through a people, through the sending and giving of the Son and the sending and giving of the Holy Spirit. God wants to reveal himself. God wants to be known. God wants to communicate with us. God wants us to be in a relationship with him based on our being made in his image, yes, but flowing beyond that into a living fellowship and community. This is consistent with

what we have come to know about the God of the Patriarchs and Matriarchs, the Judges, the Kings, the Priests, the Prophets and the righteous men and women of Israel. God's desire to make himself known can be traced throughout the Bible finding a human response in the lives of individuals, 'Here I am' and in a people, 'Here we are!' And it is the 'Here we are!' that we who are gathered here should be concerned with and not self-aggrandisement. The New Testament church affirms that God has made himself known throughout, but as the author of the Letter to the Hebrews puts it succinctly,

Long ago God spoke to our ancestors in many and various ways by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, through whom he also created the worlds. He is the reflection of God's glory and the exact imprint of God's very being, and he sustains all things by his powerful word. When he had made purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high... (Hebrews 3.1-3)

There is no better way if you have been able to follow my musings on Trinity Sunday in the year of our Lord 2023 than to point to the great icon of Andrei Rublev known as the Hospitality of Abraham. An icon based on the visit of three persons to Abraham at the Oak of Mare foreshadowing God's revelation himself as Trinity. In the icon three angels are seated at table facing outwards. The icon is written in such a way that it is open to the spectator inviting him or her to come in and sit down at table with these persons that he or she might come to participate as fully as possible in the unending circle of divine love of giving and receiving love.

No one can enter into this relationship fully without being baptised, of being yoked to Christ. Not yoked to an identity of one's own making. Not yoked to an ideology. Not being yoked to knowing better. But rather by being yoked to Christ! My yoke is easy and my burden is light, says the Lord. In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye Yigit will be baptised in the Name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Yigit will be incorporated into the Body of Christ. He will be folded in. Yigit is making this step from outside. From outside a Christian culture. He was not brought up as a Christian, but

always felt drawn to the person of Christ. On arriving in Austria to work as a classical singer he knew that he would explore the Christian faith and in order to do so he looked for and found a Christian community where he could grow. Today Yigit is to be baptised into the love which God is. John in his First Epistle writes, God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in him. He, John, is clear that the love of which he writes is not sentimental, but demanding. John writes,

“We love because he first loved us. If anyone says, ‘I love God,’ yet hates his or her brother or sister, he or she is a liar. For anyone who does not love his brother or sister, whom he or she has seen, cannot love God, whom he or she has not seen. And he has given us this command: Whoever loves God must also love his or her brother or sister’.

The Apostle Paul’s testimony to God’s love and what divine accomplishes is best captured in his letter to the church in Rome. I am always grateful that as a Christian minister, as a priest, I can read out these words of Paul at funeral services:

For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Let us say together, as I/we make the sign of the cross, the sign of love outpoured, the sign of the love that gives itself, the Grace. But before we do so, let us consider for a moment what these words actually mean for each one of us and what they should mean for this community. This ‘Here we are’! Because when we say them they become our commitment. They become our duty and our joy. The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the Love of God and the Fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all evermore.

**The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the Love of God and the Fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all evermore. Amen.**