

The Trinity: Our Source for Love

Psalm 8

Matthew 28: 16 – 20

Preached by Dr. Cahill

Babcock Presbyterian Church

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Hundreds of years before Christ, a psalmist sat down and wrote a beautiful prayer expressing his amazement after being overwhelmed by the glory of God.

O Lord, our sovereign,
How majestic is your name in
all the earth!
You have set your glory above
the heavens...
When I look at your heavens,
the work of your fingers,
the moon and the stars that
you have established...

Then the Psalmist went on to wonder why God would even consider trusting us with dominion over his creation.

What are human beings that you
are mindful of them,
mortals that you care for them?
You have made them a little
lower than God...
You have given them to dominion
over the works of your hands;
you have put all things under
their feet.

(Psalm 8)

This is a prayer of someone gob smacked by the all powerful God giving flawed human beings an important role to play in his creation. Standing under the open night sky and seeing all the stars Abraham couldn't number, the psalmist had an epiphany that made him feel like the tiniest ant in the colony standing beside the largest elephant in the herd.

Even that metaphor can't describe the psalmist's unnerving sensation of being overwhelmed by the power of God.

Humbled by the Eternal's majestic presence, the psalmist was left feeling puny but not insignificant. He was exalted by God's love.

Last Sunday we celebrated the Holy Spirit, the third person of the Trinity. Today our celebration focuses on all three persons of the unsolvable mystery we call the Trinity.

We recite these words every Sunday, “I believe in God the Father Almighty... and in Jesus Christ his only Son our Lord... I believe in the Holy Ghost...”

As you know, this formula raises more questions than answers.

Judaism, Christianity and Islam are the three great monotheistic religions. The Jews were the first to proclaim, “Hear, O Israel, the Lord your God is one.” The Muslims agree, “Allah is one.” We Christians believe God is one, but then we complicate things by asserting the formula, “three persons in one God,” causing both Jews and Muslims to wonder how we Christians think we can have it both ways.

Yogi Berra was explaining his unique relationship with Yankee owner George Steinbrenner and the team manager, Billy Martin. Known to mangle his metaphors, Berra said, “Me, George and Billy are two of a kind.” If the three of them are two of a kind, you can understand how it’s easy to confuse something three of a kind.

During his ministry, Jesus spoke many times about his Father in heaven. In Gethsemane he even called God, “Abba,” meaning the intimate term, “Daddy.”

Jesus also spoke of the Holy Spirit guiding and empowering him every day. At one point, Jesus even warned against blaspheming against the Holy Spirit, which he called the unforgiveable sin. Then, in the Upper Room, Jesus promised the Father would send the Holy Spirit to inspire us after he was gone.

Jesus spoke often about his relationships with both the Father and the Holy Spirit. But it wasn’t until his ascension into heaven that Jesus invoked the Trinity for the first time.

He commanded, “...make disciples of all nations, baptizing them, in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.”

It was bound to happen. The early Christians had sharp theological differences over Jesus’s relationship with God the Father and God the Spirit. Wanting to heal these controversies before they ripped the Church apart, bishops and respected theologians prayed for guidance and searched the scriptures. Finally, they came up with the best possible explanation for Jesus’ formula, “Father, Son and Holy Spirit,” that was set down in the Nicene Creed.

Not surprisingly, not everyone accepted this explanation. Even today heresies hound the Church, but the Nicene Creed has stood the test of time.

Despite all the prayers and hard work poured into the Nicene Creed, the doctrine of the Trinity still remains an enigma wrapped up in ambiguity.

And that’s the way it should be. If we could fully understand God, God wouldn’t be God anymore. God is the unsolvable mystery that can never be understood.

God can only be worshiped.

O come, let us worship and bow
down
let us kneel before the Lord
our maker,
For he is our God,
and we are the people of his
pasture and the
sheep of his hand. (Psalm 95:6-7)

By declaring, “God is our God and we are his people,” the psalmist implies an intimate bond exists between God and us. Entering into this relationship won’t solve the mystery but it does enfold us into the mystery.

Remember, Christianity is about nurturing our relationships with God and each other. Nurturing through worship doesn’t help us understand God but it does help us know God. Bowing down to the mystery of the Trinity draws us into that free flowing, back and forth love affair between God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit.

In John’s letter to the churches, we find one of the shorter but most profound verses in scripture, “God is love.” God loves us because God is love. We can love one another because God is love. We can know, enjoy and serve God forever because God is love.

Jesus was sent to invite us into that mysterious relationships between the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. By sacrificing himself on the cross, Jesus bridged the gap between God and us.

Later, the Holy Spirit was sent to empower us to the love the Father, the Son and Holy Spirit and each other so we can spread Christ’s gospel.

Don’t try to understand it, instead, bow down and enter the life pulse of the creation, the three persons of the Trinity’s love for each other.

Last Sunday, we could embrace this love when the Holy Spirit rushed through our sanctuary. We could see the Spirit’s love in each other’s faces. We could hear the Spirit’s energy in our voices. God was certainly up to something.

From the feed back we received this past week, something happened in church last Sunday, not just in this sanctuary but also downstairs in the Fellowship Hall. As we worshipped together up here, we expressed our love for God by singing our praises and listening for God’s word. Afterward over brunch downstairs, we were invited to get to know each other better through conversations with our sisters and brothers in Christ.

Keeping these conversations going can lead to further conversations about sharing our visions and dreaming our dreams about becoming a sacred space where earth and heaven meet, where the glory of God fills the earth beginning with the neighborhood where God, in his infinite wisdom put us.

For years we've been waiting for this moment. You know me. I'm not one to get overly excited about things but I believe the time has come for a new beginning at Babcock Church. God is up to something big and he wants us to help him make it happen. Why us?

“What are human beings that you are mindful of them, mortals that you care for them? You have given them dominion over the works of your hands. You have put all things under their feet.”

God is about to lead us across the Jordan and into the Promised Land, for us and anyone else needing the spiritual nourishment and affirmation flowing from God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

What amazed the Psalmist should amaze us: the great and powerful God of creation, who makes us feel puny and insignificant by comparison, is entrusting to our care the lives of the men, women and children, living in our neighborhood hungering for peace and justice as much as we do.

As we gather around the Lords table this morning to remember Jesus' commitment to us, remember your commitment to him. Then, with God's help, let us brace ourselves for the any challenge we face in the coming months.

We are about to step out from our comfort zone and into the unknown. I call it the “unknown” because we are still discerning what exactly God is calling us to do. But we do know this, we are called to make a difference by making disciples of all nations, in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

God has gathered in this place people from different cultures, ethnicities and political opinions. Even so, we all have one thing in common, our commitment to Christ, each other and his coming kingdom.

But we also have something else in common, God's commitment to us. And that makes all the difference.

On this Trinity Sunday, may God bless you all, in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.