

Sermon Archive 588

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Knox Church, Ōtautahi Christchurch

Reflections for Trinity Sunday

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The Goal of the Doctrine of the Trinity

The doctrine of the Trinity is the church's attempt to order its reflection, in a fulsome way, on how God has been revealed throughout history - a **description** of how God has seemed to be present in the field of human perception and meditation. Three great movements are claimed: creation, redemption, ecclesiology - corresponding to Creator, Christ, and Spirit (held together in a way that is about life, mutual indwelling - the meeting of persons - and love). The church developed the doctrine not to show off its cleverness, or to confuse children and students of theology, but so that people of faith might worship with truth and humble understanding. It's about people like us taking a careful, reverent posture before the One in whom we live, move and have our being. Who is God? And in light of whom we believe **God** is, who are **we**? So today, two reflections: (1) Who is this God? And (2) Who are these people?

The first lesson is from Genesis.

A Reading: Genesis 1:24 - 2:3

A Reflection: Who is this God

I ask you, "who is this God?" You answer me: this is One who creates living things of every kind. So this is a source of life - a breathing of spirit into the nostrils, so the clay-bound thing rises up and moves and dances, and sings and praises, and itself brings life. But not only is this the creation of living things - it is living things of every kind. There are big ones and small ones, feathered ones and gilled ones. Four-footed ones, six legged ones, ones that crawled on their bellies. This is One with no slavish attachment to "one size fits all", or the idea that one design renders all others distractions - any colour so long as it's black. No, this is One from whom flows colour, and texture, and dappling of the light. When I ask you "who is this God", you

begin your answer by speaking of these things - source of creativity, and wonder, and variety in life. And I am pleased that you are speaking to me.

I ask you, "who is this God?" You answer me: this is One who says "let's create something in our image, according to our likeness", and comes up with us - the human being. Again, the beings are all different - male, female, brown, black, white, clever, simple, fast, slow. Each bearing the image. So does that mean that the image isn't in the black or brown, because it's also in the white? Not constituted by the male, because it's also present in the female? Is it maybe in the diversity - recognising itself in the other - I in you and you in me? I don't know!

Maybe the image is in the asking of those sorts of questions - who are human beings that you love them - looking at the stars, the questioning questions. It is written that this is One who "puts eternity in the heart" - the wondering, the self-reflective practitioner of living. **Or** is it the creativity - given that the One so far has been expressed through creating. If these things are the reflecting the image of God, then the God is the nurturer of contemplation, wonder, self-understanding - looking for one's essence revealed as being shared with others? When I ask you "who is this God", you continue your answer by speaking of One who desires to see Oneself shining through others. You speak to me of these things - and I am pleased that you are speaking to me.

I ask you, "who is this God?" You answer me: this is One who **blesses** the living things and calls upon them to be fruitful. Bless you, you living thing! It's my desire for you that you should flourish. I do not wish for you darkness, cold or meanness. I wish for you only fulfilment, growth, a grateful and generous heart. I wish for you that each night you might remember something beautiful from your day. I wish for you that at the end of your life, yours will be a prayer of deep thanksgiving. And so, I guess also I wish for you a government that will take you seriously, leaders who treat you with respect. People who avoid describing you by number or category or slur. None of that. Rather, bless you, you living thing - be fruitful and multiply.

So - - - you are describing a God of such hope and good will for what has been made. I ask you "who is this God", and in your answer is the idea of blessing and hope. And I am pleased that you are speaking to me.

I ask you, "who is this God?" You answer me: this is One who looks at what has been made - not just the separate bits, but the whole thing together, and sees that it is good - indeed, very good. "It's easy to see defects", you say, "but it is almost natural to this One, for the eye first to go to what is good. **Our** eye goes first to the disability - the eye of the **One** goes to something else. **Our** eye goes first to the dirty trousers and the "help me" sign that speaks of failure. The eye of the **One** goes to something else. **Our** eye goes to that part of our neighbour's irritating personality, the things that trigger us. The eye of the **One** sees beneath all that, to a heart that has no malice and really wants to please. **Our** eye goes to the distance we have yet to travel. The eye of the **One** sees from that strange position of new creation where we say "all shall be well, and all shall be well, and all manner of thing shall be well. [Julian of Norwich] I ask you "who is this God"; your answer inspires me to think about a new way of looking at the world, and seeing what is good. And I am pleased that you are speaking to me.

I ask you, "who is this God?" You answer me: this is One who, having worked, rested. It's not all about doing, working, achieving - even achieving the glorious work. It also is about pausing, ceasing, quietly loving, appreciating what has been done, and being at peace. The voices of the world shout at us - demand our action, activism, urgency. And yes, there are six days of work. But after the work, the One rests. I ask you "who is this God?". You speak to me about One who is still. "Be still, yourself", you say, "and know that God is God". And I am pleased that you are speaking to me.

I ask. You speak. We gather around the mystery of who God is. I am pleased that we are speaking - and I believe that you also may be. On Trinity Sunday, let us worship God.

Music for Reflection

A Reading: Matthew 28: 16-20

A Reflection: Who are these people?

I ask you "who are these people?" You answer me:

These are people whose ancestors believed, as yours did, that God had left a finger print on who we are - we living things that are human. And

who in recent times have come to believe that a beautiful demonstration of God being present to-and-in humanity, had been shared with them - in the Galilean whose name was above all names, who called them, fed them, grew them and pierced their hearts, who lived, died and rose.

I ask you who they are. You tell me that they are those who worshipped him, but doubted - people in a cauldron of faith and un-faith, knowing and doubting, "Lord I believe, help my unbelief". As the water bubbles and churns, and up is down, and down is up, the process of soul-making . . . Faith, not certainty - but certainty, sort of, and really - firmly we believe and truly - and cocks crow and tears fall. When they saw him, the worshipped him, but they doubted.

I ask you who they are. You tell me that they are people who have been given a name "Father, Son and Holy Spirit" and who are moving into the world assured that the name will bring life, as they give it to other unstintingly - with that love and generosity they saw from the start..

I ask you who they are. You tell me that they are people who are trying to do everything their Master taught them - all he commanded them to do. They fail, of course, because they are the creatures God has made out of clay. They rise from their failure, because he rose - and his feet of clay were the last they saw of him, ascending - till the Spirit came.

I ask you who they are. You tell me that they are people unto whom it was promised "Lo, I am with you always, to the end of the age". People of a promise.

I ask you who they are. You speak to me, and I am pleased that we are speaking. And lo, we (you and I) are one in the One.

And we keep a moment of quiet.

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