

Holy Trinity Sunday Year B 2021
May 30, 2021

Grace to you and peace in the name of our Triune God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen.

Today is the festival of the Holy Trinity. Now, when it comes to sermons, studies, and conversations about the Trinity, I imagine you've left church scratching your head a few times, at least. This is because the Trinity is a mystery of God that we cannot fully comprehend. We proclaim in our creeds that we believe in one God, but we also profess that God is manifest in three ways, as Father, Son, and Spirit. And so, we get this difficult math problem of God being three-in-one, and one-in-three. Maybe things would have been a whole lot easier if we believed in one God who is the head, and two lesser gods who were subordinate to the first. However, while that may be easier to understand, that's not what we've experienced in our God who rules over all space and time, lived in human form and is in our every breath.

And so, in some ways, when we talk about God as Father, Son, and Spirit—the Holy Trinity—we are left with a mystery. We're trying to understand God who is more than anything we can imagine, God who sometimes works in ways that don't make sense to us, God who is both far away in heaven and right here with us, God who exists in human and divine form, God whose plans are far more complex and detailed than we could ever dream. The human mind is simply not capable of understanding God and all the ways that God works. Thankfully, that's not our job.

Our job is to trust God to guide us, to care for us, to protect us, and to love us. And this way of talking about God—as guide, caretaker, protector and loving parent—these are characteristics of God that we are more able to understand, because we have experienced these things in relationship with one another.

In fact, this is what I love about the church. God has gathered us together – here inside these four walls – and as the church throughout the world – so that we can guide, encourage, care for, love, and protect one another. This is the purpose of the church. God has created the church so that we can be in relationship together.

And in many ways, this is what has been lacking over these last 15 months during the pandemic. We hear from the very beginning of Genesis that humans were not meant to live in isolation. Relationships are important. But during this pandemic, we've done our best to isolate from others in order to keep one another safe and healthy. Sometimes, we've been alone in our homes for days or weeks. Sometimes, we've refrained from hugging or holding our grandchildren, nieces and nephews. Sometimes, we've longed for the chance to visit face to face with friends and loved ones, rather than behind a mask. And sometimes, we've been unable to gather as the church because of the pandemic.

The pandemic has made it harder to live in relationship as the church. Now, we've done things from time to time to stay in touch, and thankfully we're at a point where many of us feel comfortable gathering in person. But in this time apart, I think we've all seen the basic human need for relationships with one another—friends, family, neighbors, loved ones, brothers and sisters in Christ. We're not meant to live in isolation; we need relationships.

This basic human need for relationship is so important, in fact, that God chose to model it for us in God's self. God exists in relationship—as the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, three ways of relating to one another in one God. *God exists in relationship.* And if there's one thing worth remembering about the Trinity, it's that God values relationships so much that God chose to exist in relationship *in God's very own being.*

God desires relationships, and more specifically, God desires relationships with us. Our relationship with God is far more important than being able to quote the Bible word for word, or memorizing the Lord's Prayer, Apostles' Creed and Ten Commandments. Knowing God's Word and these pillars of our faith are important, but what is *most* important is knowing that God is with us, and that God is in relationship with us.

Each of our Bible passages today talks about relationships. In Isaiah, God appears to Isaiah in all God's glory, and brings him back into relationship by offering him forgiveness. Then God calls Isaiah to bring *all* the people of Israel back into relationship with God. God desires relationship with God's people, and God works through Isaiah to make it happen.

In the Gospel of John, we hear God's desire to be in relationship with the whole world. "For God so loved the world..." the famous verse begins. God loves this world and through Christ's death on the cross, God is always in relationship with everything and everyone in it. But the next verse tells us even more about this relationship. "Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him." Our relationship with God in Christ is a relationship *not* of condemnation, it is a relationship of salvation. God has chosen to be in relationship with us, and God's relationship with us is about salvation.

And in the reading from Romans, we hear even more specifically about our relationship with God. Paul tells us that we have been adopted into God's family by the Spirit. In baptism, we have been named children of God, and we enter, officially, into relationship with God. We are God's children, and because of this relationship, we are heirs with Christ, and we will be glorified with him.

And so, God is all about relationship. God exists in relationship, and God draws us into relationship with God by adopting us as God's children. And this is what Holy Trinity Sunday is all about. It's about God's deep desire for relationship—a desire so deep that God's very self embodies relationship, and it's about God's loving and saving relationship with each and every one of us as God's children. Thanks be to God. Amen.