

Trinity Sunday
Episcopal Church of the Ascension
May 26, 2024

In the name of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. + Amen.

Intro.

Good morning.

Our daughter Poppy is 3 and half, which means she is very curious and very very talkative. This week in the car she looked out the window and was talking about birds, telling me how birds live in their “nest-es” and how she saw a bird that “runned” on the ground. “Nestes” and “runned” sound like absolutely crazy words to me. But for a three-year-old, she's actually just following good grammar rules trying to make sense of a confusing world.

Today is Trinity Sunday and today we are like three years talking about a confusing Trinity with words that might not make much sense. But we, just like three-year-olds, are trying to make sense of a confusing world.

Trinity Sunday: (1)

Trinity Sunday is one of those special days in our church year. In fact, today is one of the 7 pinnacle feast days in the Episcopal Church just like Easter, Pentecost and Christmas. Originally today was all about dissecting the theology of the Trinity and because of that, a few special traditions rose up around this day. One of them is that oftentimes a Seminarian or Lay Preacher gets this special opportunity to preach and tackle the Trinity, but that might have more to do with Memorial Weekend than anything else. The other really “fun” tradition is reading the Athanasian Creed. If you are really curious about this Creed I’d invite you to ask me or one of the clergy about it after the service. But essentially you can find this in the Book of Common Prayer on page 864 and while it used to be permitted to use up to 19 Sundays a year in the Church of England....about the only time this statement is used Liturgically today is on Trinity Sunday and that is becoming increasingly rare and you will find out why in about 6 minutes when we will read it together. Nonetheless, our church keeps this creed because of its deep theology around the Trinity and descriptions of Christ.

But to me, Trinity Sunday is about much more than abstract theology, guest preachers, and a really long old creed. To me, **Trinity Sunday is all about being close to God and being sent by God.**

Isaiah 6 and Scriptures: (3)

We see this idea no clearer than our First Lesson of Isaiah 6. The Chapter begins by marking time when King Uzziah died and King Uzziah was essentially the most powerful and successful king of Israel or Judah's history since Solomon. Uzziah would have had the most wonderful legacy until...he marched into the temple usurping the role of a priest and was about to make an offering of incense when suddenly he was struck with leprosy and spent the remainder of his life locked away while others ruled in his place.

Isaiah 6 begins with that history in mind, and those same coals for the incense that brought judgment on Uzziah were used to purify Isaiah and that difference began with Isaiah's humility. Uzziah stepped where he didn't belong; Isaiah humbled himself when he didn't have to. The resulting end to this passage is Isaiah's declaration in the presence of God: "Here I am, send me." **Close to God and sent by God.**

There are many more connections with this idea in the other readings for today. Romans 8 shows us how we are so close to God in that we can be called the very children of God and even joint heirs with Christ. **Close to God and sent by God.**

The Gospel passage in John 3 paints this picture of our closeness to God like being born again or born from above and sent out like the wind to and fro. **Close to God and sent by God.**

As a bonus, these Scriptures contain all three persons of the Trinity. You see, the Trinity doesn't have to be some abstract theology, it can be really personable like we see in these texts. **Trinity Sunday really is all about being close to God and being sent by God.**

Trinity Icon: (5.20)

And this is something that the Church has known for a long time. You'll notice on the cover of your bulletin a particular icon of the Holy Trinity which is known as Rublev's Trinity. One of the many reasons I love icons is because they tell powerful stories even when you can't read words. This icon tells many powerful stories. The three figures represent the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit. They are not three women they are just ageless and genderless.

On the left is represented the Father, with ethereal colors you can't really see since no one has seen God. In the middle is represented Jesus who always has these colors of red and blue, humanity clothed in divinity with a king's band on his shoulder. On the right is represented the Holy Spirit in blue and green as the Spirit of God hovered over the waters of creation.

What I love most about the icon, among the many things here, is the hands. The Father points to the Son, sending the Son to us. The Son points to the Spirit, sending the Spirit to us...which we just celebrated last week with Pentecost. The Spirit points somewhere else and it is not to God. The Spirit points to you. The Father sends the Son. The Son sends the Spirit. And the Spirit sends you. Our job is to complete the circle. **Close to God and sent by God.**

Conclusion: (730)

I use to think of the Trinity as abstract, far away and something I would never understand. But the Trinity doesn't have to be that. The Trinity can be as intimate as a family God invites us into. The question for us is how we respond: Like King Uzziah with Pride or like Isaiah in humility. My second favorite part of this icon beside the hands is the missing brick in the table. The focal point of this picture draws your attention to that missing brick and I see it as an invitation to get so small in the presence of God that I can fit inside it and become part of God's table. **Close to God and sent by God.** When I pray like that, with my gaze on that missing brick, I can't help but notice that chalice as a reminder of God's unending love for me. When we come to this table later in the service, I hope you remember that same truth: **God loves you, be close to God and be sent by God. Amen. (845)**

Scripture:

John 3:1-17

There was a Pharisee named Nicodemus, a leader of the Jews. He came to Jesus by night and said to him, "Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God; for no one can do these signs that you do apart from the presence of God." Jesus answered him, "Very truly, I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above." Nicodemus said to him, "How can anyone be born after having grown old? Can one enter a second time into the mother's womb and be born?" Jesus answered, "Very truly, I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit. What is born of the flesh is flesh, and what is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not be astonished that I said to you, 'You must be born from above.' The wind blows where it chooses, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit." Nicodemus said to him, "How can these things be?" Jesus answered him, "Are you a teacher of Israel, and yet you do not understand these things?

"Very truly, I tell you, we speak of what we know and testify to what we have seen; yet you do not receive our testimony. If I have told you about earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you about heavenly things? No one has ascended into heaven except the one who descended from heaven, the Son of Man. And just as Moses lifted up the

serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.

“For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.

“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.

Isaiah 6:1-8

In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lofty; and the hem of his robe filled the temple. Seraphs were in attendance above him; each had six wings: with two they covered their faces, and with two they covered their feet, and with two they flew. And one called to another and said:

“Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts;
the whole earth is full of his glory.”

The pivots on the thresholds shook at the voices of those who called, and the house filled with smoke. And I said: “Woe is me! I am lost, for I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips; yet my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts!”

Then one of the seraphs flew to me, holding a live coal that had been taken from the altar with a pair of tongs. The seraph touched my mouth with it and said: “Now that this has touched your lips, your guilt has departed and your sin is blotted out.” Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, “Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?” And I said, “Here am I; send me!”

Prayer:

Almighty and everlasting God, you have given to us your servants grace, by the confession of a true faith, to acknowledge the glory of the eternal Trinity, and in the power of your divine Majesty to worship the Unity: Keep us steadfast in this faith and worship, and bring us at last to see you in your one and eternal glory, O Father; who with the Son and the Holy Spirit live and reign, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*