

Trinity Sunday

May 31, 2015

Rev. Ken Wratten at St. Stephen's, San Jose

Isaiah 6:1-8 The Lord said "Who shall I send?"; Isaiah said, "Here am I, send me!"

Romans 8:12-17 We are children of God, joint heirs with Christ.

John 3:1-17 "You must be born from above." Born of the Spirit

We state in the Nicene Creed (BCP 358, date 325):

We believe in God, the Father, the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth.

We believe in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son.

The Apostles' Creed (BCP 96, date questionable) makes nearly the same statement, but does not include the phrase that the Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son. The Nicene Creed added that phrase to specifically state that the Spirit is co-eternal with the Father and the Son.

The Athanasian Creed (BCP 864, perhaps 6th century) states:

For there is one Person of the Father, another of the Son, and another of the Holy Ghost. But the God head of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost is all one, the Glory equal, the Majesty co-eternal.

The creeds proclaim the mystery of God; they do not define it.

We Christians believe in one God, we are monotheistic. We also experience God as Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier. And so the early church saw the three unique "persons" of God which are different facets of the one "essence" of God.

In our Gospel lesson today, Jesus discusses with Nicodemus the need for anyone wanting to experience the reign of God in their life, to be born of the Spirit. Jesus is describing something beyond our birth in the flesh. It is only through our birth in the Spirit that faith happens. This birth requires us to invite God the Spirit to direct our own spirit. We consists of body, mind, and spirit. Our spirit is that part of us that longs for connection to something greater than ourselves, something eternal and unchangeable. This is not something we can accomplish by ourselves, but we can ask God the Spirit to direct our own spirit.

The breakthrough concept that Jesus delivered to Nicodemus was that experiencing God's Kingdom is a personal experience, and a personal decision. It isn't something that everyone will experience unless they make the personal decision to

live by faith. If we decide to only live our physical life, we will miss God's Kingdom. We have to decide to also live a spiritual life.

Experiencing God's Kingdom is not based on what our parents believed. It is not even based on living a good life. Jesus explained that this personal experience with God is based on being spiritually re-born, born from above, made a new creation by reaching the decision to believe that Jesus Christ is God.

We celebrate the Trinity of God because we experience God the Father as transcendent creator - above us and above all things. We experience God the loving Son, who lived and died for us to demonstrate with powerful examples of gentleness and humility and suffering how very much our God loves us; he is our redeemer. We experience God the Spirit, dwelling in every believer at the same time, and giving us comfort, counsel, and booster shots of faith when we need them the most. The Spirit is our sanctifier, making us sacred, set aside for God's special purpose. However the theologians word it, we know how it feels to experience God. God isn't worried in the least about us trying to figure Him out. But God longs for us to experience relationship with Him.

Relationships are complicated, right? When I think about my relationship just with my wife Ruthie, I try to represent myself as faithful husband, trained listener, Tim the Toolman fixer of broken things, remover of spiders and other creepy things, finder of lost keys and sun glasses, and humble apologizer (only when I have to). I think the relationship with God is even more complex than our human relationships.

For me, the point to our setting aside a day to commemorate the Trinity is not to fully explain the Trinity, or to feel that we need to. We reach the conclusion that finite human logic is not going to fully capture the nature of the working relationship we have with God. It is something to simply choose, to experience, and to celebrate. Amen.