

Sermon 12 June 2022 Trinity Sunday

The concept of the Holy Trinity is not an easy concept to grasp, so let's try and keep it as simple as possible. But first, why is it problematical? Christianity is a monotheistic religion, in other words, we believe in the one God. We share this with Judaism and Islam, which figures, because we share the same roots. However, where we differ with Judaism and Islam is that we believe that this one God is also, at the same time, three Gods – Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Each is a person or a God in its own right. Now, mathematically that doesn't actually work, and in fact, it is impossible. So this is where it becomes a little tricky. So what do we mean? How do we explain it?

I think the best way to think of it is the three forms or functions of God. But before we do that, let's for a moment explore this number 'three.' Three is a mystical number that crops up frequently in folklore. We talk about third time lucky; I give you three guesses; things come in threes (usually bad); on the count of three. There are the folk stories of the three little pigs, Goldilocks and the three bears, the three billy goats gruff.

There is another superstition that it is unlucky to take a third light, that is, to be the third person to light a cigarette from the same match or lighter. This superstition is asserted to have originated among the soldiers in the trenches of the First World War when a sniper might see the first light, begin to take aim on the second and fire on the third.

Three is considered a sacred number in almost all ancient cultures and even most modern religions. Let's take Judaism as an example. There are three Shabbat meals; Daniel prayed regularly three times a day; Noah had three sons; Job had three daughters; the prophet Balaam beat his donkey three times! *That's got to be the clincher*

Then there is Christianity. Three wise men visited the baby Jesus and brought three gifts; the devil tempted Jesus three times in the desert; the ministry of Jesus lasted three years; Peter denied knowing Jesus three times, and then three times Jesus asked him to affirm his love; in the Garden of Gethsemane Jesus prayed three times for God to take away the cup of suffering; there were three crosses at Calvary; Jesus died at three o'clock in the afternoon; Jesus rose from the dead on the third day; Jesus said he would rebuild the Temple in three days; Paul went blind for three days before his conversion. So we can see what an important number this number 'three' is.

So back to the three functions of God, which is really what the Holy Trinity is all about. We begin with God the Father. Another word we can use here is 'Creator.' The very first verse in the Bible reads, *In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.* Genesis 1:1. It all begins with God our Creator, the Father of all mankind, going right back to the Big Bang. Many scientists/biologists will tell you that everything can be explained through evolution beginning with the Big Bang. My question is this – How can you explain this ginormous burst of energy, originating from a vacuum, that started this whole chain reaction that led to

creation as we know it? Bottom line is they can't. The simple, but at the same time, complex answer is that is God.

And by the way, I don't have any problem with evolution. That is simply the process by which God has made us what we are today.

Then we come to God the Son, the person of Jesus. Jesus is simply God in human form. That lies at the heart of Christian belief and what, in the end, differentiates us from any other religion or belief. We say, 'God is love.' Well, Jesus embodies and personifies love. He teaches love. He demands we practise love. It is through the person of Jesus that we understand the nature of God. It is a bit like pulling back the curtains to see what sort of a day it is.

Ans so that leaves the third person of the Holy Trinity, the Holy Spirit. We dealt with the Holy Spirit last Sunday, Pentecost Sunday, so I don't intend to go there again. Suffice to say, the Holy Spirit is the presence of God, the power of God working in people and through people.

Instances of healing are illustrations of the Holy Trinity in action. First, let me give you an example. Paul Trousdale, successful businessman, was admitted to hospital with severe gastrointestinal bleeding after fainting several times. He required many blood transfusions over several days. He had only recently begun to attend church, and his minister visited one morning and prayed for him. The minister said he was healed, but doctors would not release him from hospital until his condition was re-tested. All the tests showed the bleeding has ceased and that he was completely healed.

What has the Holy Trinity got to do with this? Let's work backwards. It was God's power, in other words, the Holy Spirit, that in the end effected the healing. It was faith in Jesus Christ that enabled that healing to take place. And it all began with God, God the Father. God the Father gave rise to Jesus, and God the Father uses his power, the Holy Spirit, to bring about the healing. Here we have the three functions of God in action.

So how does this relate to you and me? Where do we fit into this Trinitarian model? Again, let's keep it simple, because it actually is really quite simple. We are people of faith. Well, I am making that assumption because we are gathered here this morning in worship. As Christians, we believe in the divinity of Christ; in other words, Christ is the embodiment of God. As people of faith, we pray. Perhaps another assumption, but I think quite a safe one.

Now, it doesn't really matter just what we are praying for. It might be for forgiveness. It might be for help for others or for ourselves. That help might involve a degree of healing; it might involve direction, wisdom or strength. Whatever it is, it will necessitate God's power; in other words, the Holy Spirit.

So you see, in that simple act of prayer, we have invoked the three persons of the Holy Trinity. It's really quite simple. Let me finish with something we are quite familiar with and which expresses the truth of the Holy Trinity.

The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all, evermore. Amen.

Reverend Warner Wilder