

Sermon Trinity Sunday 2023

Matthew 28:16-20

The concept of the Holy Trinity is, on the face of it, not an easy concept to grasp, but if we take a close look at it, it's perhaps not quite as complex as first appears. So let's try and keep it simple. But firstly, just what is this concept, and why can it appear to be a little difficult to comprehend?

Christianity is a monotheistic religion, in other words, we believe in the one God. We share this with Judaism and Islam. However, where we differ with Judaism and Islam is that we believe that this one God is also three Gods – Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Each is a person or God in its own right. Now mathematically that doesn't work – 3 don't make 1! So this is where it can appear to be a little tricky. So what do we mean? How do we explain it?

One way of approaching this concept is to think of the Holy Trinity as three different functions of God, and I begin by referring to our music group. Each person in that group has a different role to play, but they combine to produce a particular sound. They are each a musician or singer in their own right with their own function within the group but they are unified in both their purpose and in their outcome. What they produce is a product of their combined talents and function, and it becomes a creation from which we all benefit.

So let's apply this approach to the Holy Trinity. What are the functions of each person of the Holy Trinity. We begin with God the Father. Another word we can use here is Creator. God is father of all creation. It all begins with him, and what a mind-blowing job he has done. It is virtually impossible to grasp the enormity, the complexity, the sheer beauty of God's creation. Psalm 8 is a wonderful tribute to God's creation. *'O Lord our God, your greatness is seen in all the world.'* And how many of us have sat glued to the television as we absorb the wonders of a David Attenborough programme?

Just a quick observation here on the debate between Evolutionists and Creationists on this issue of creation. Firstly, let me say this, I don't have a problem with evolution. That's how God has effected creation. God is still responsible. But the question I pose to those who deny God's part in all of this, is this. It is accepted that it all began with the Big Bang billions of years ago. How can you explain this ginormous explosion of energy which gave rise to creation as we know it today? Where did this energy come from?

Don't tell me it was just gases and extreme heat. Maybe it was, but they have to have a source. You can't have energy of that scale, or of any scale for that matter, developing out of a vacuum. That source was God. Am I being a tad simplistic? Maybe, but I am a great believer in keeping things as simple and understandable as possible.

Then we come to God the Son, the person of Jesus. I want to depict the interrelationship between Jesus and God through the question of love. We believe that God is love. John states it clearly in 1 John 4:16, *'God is love, and all who live in love live in God, and God lives in them.'* Now the point is this, Jesus embodies and personifies love. He teaches love, he practises love and he demands we practise love. John 13:34 *'So now I am giving you a new commandment: love each other. Just as I have loved you, you should love each other.'* Then Jesus goes on to say something very interesting, *'Your love for everyone will prove to the world that you are my disciples.'*

I believe this demonstrates that God, Jesus and love are inextricably linked. I also believe that herein lies an expression of the Holy Trinity - God, Son of God and love, love being the power of God working in and

through people, in other words, the Holy Spirit. I would also make the comment that the understanding of God, Jesus and love being inextricably linked is the central element of Christian belief and theology.

I would like to illustrate further this connection between Jesus, love and the Holy Spirit. Bishop Curry, who gave that wonderful sermon at the wedding of Harry and Meghan, said, *'Love can be sacrificial, and in doing so, becomes redemptive, and that can change lives.'* I have always believed that the ultimate form of love has to be forgiveness, and that can undoubtedly be redemptive. Let me tell you a story.

Some years ago, a 26-year-old Californian woman, Amy Biebel, on a visit to South Africa, was set upon and beaten to death in one of Cape Town's shanty towns. Amy's killers, Nofomela and Peni, were driven by frustration and hate. They were imprisoned.

Amy's parents came to South Africa. They set up a foundation in Amy's name to fund community projects in the bleak poverty-stricken townships where Amy had worked and died. They pushed for the release of Nofomela and Peni and after four years they were released. Ever since then, they have been employed by the foundation run by Amy's parents.

Many people in South Africa were outraged but for Amy's parents the healing had begun. Out of their ability to forgive, to practise that power of love, they in return received the power to not only get on with their lives, but also to put something in place which benefits so many lives, lives which through their harsh circumstances led to feelings that were ultimately expressed in the tragic death of Amy.

This is the redemptive power of love in action, and this is exactly what Jesus stood for in the name of his Father, and God our Father, the Father of the Holy Trinity. It is also the power of God working in people and through people, and this is the Holy Spirit, the third person of the Holy Trinity.

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