

Sermon Trinity Sunday 2025

Colossians 2:6-9 Matthew 3:13-16

The Holy Trinity as such is not referred to directly in the Bible. However, there are examples, albeit not very many, of the Trinity in action. In our gospel reading, we see an example: *'After his baptism, as Jesus came up out of the water, the heavens were opened and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and settling on him. And a voice from heaven said, "This is my dearly loved Son, who brings me great joy."*' Matthew 3:16-17. In these two verses we see God the Father, God the Son (Jesus) and the God's Spirit (the Holy Spirit) all working together.

The concept of the Holy Spirit 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 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 the third time lucky; I give you three guesses; things come in threes (usually bad); on the count of three. There are folk stories of the three little pigs, Goldilocks and the three bears, the three billy goats gruff.

Three is considered a sacred number in almost all ancient cultures and even most modern religions. Let's take Judaism for 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!

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 Jesus asked him to affirm his love three times; 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 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 '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 our Christian belief and what, in the end, differentiates us from any other religion or belief. Jesus said, *'Just believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me.'* John 14:11. I quote from our first reading: *'For in Christ lives all the fullness of God in a human body.'* Colossians 2:9.

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 – a loving, forgiving God, and quite different to the God we see portrayed in the Old Testament. It is a bit like pulling back the curtains to see what sort of a day it is.

And 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, through people.

Instances of healing are illustrations of the Holy Trinity in action. Let me give you an example. Paul Trousdale, a 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 him one morning and prayed for him. The minister said he was healed, but doctors would not release him from hospital until his condition was retested. All the tests showed the bleeding had 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 brought about the healing. It was faith in Christ that enabled to healing to take place. That was the outcome of his attending of church. And it all began with God, as everything does – 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. 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. We have already looked at that. As people of faith, we pray. Perhaps another assumption, but I think quite a safe one.

Now, it doesn't matter just what we are praying for. It might be for forgiveness. It might involve direction, guidance, healing, 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. I said at the beginning that the concept of the Holy Trinity was difficult to grasp because mathematically it doesn't quite add up – three into one doesn't really work. But perhaps the Trinity is not fanciful mathematics; it is actually plain biblical revelation of who God is and how God functions.

Let me finish with a short benediction we are familiar with and which expresses the truth of the Holy Spirit. I quote from 2 Corinthians 13:14 – *'May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all, evermore.'* Amen.