

Isaiah 6:1-8

Romans 8:12-17

John 3:1-17

Psalm 29

Ahhh, Trinity Sunday, one of seven Principle Feasts of the Episcopal Church. But unlike other Principle Feasts, Easter, Ascension, Pentecost, All Saints, Christmas and Epiphany, nothing actually happened on a particular day to cause this feast. Today we celebrate an idea, not an occasion, but a concept. And it's a very slippery, elusive, intellectual sort of concept. The Trinity is a mystery we cannot comprehend. At the same time, it is a reality revealed to us by God.

When I was in seminary and taking my first preaching class there were two types of preaching enthusiasts. There were those who would do anything to avoid preaching on Trinity Sunday, and those who thought it was the best gig ever. And both sides had the same reason for their positions. The enthusiasts said there is no explaining the Trinity so you can talk about whatever you want. And the avoiders said there is no explaining the Trinity so what am I supposed to say? I won't tell you which group I was in.

Now, although there are many biblical references to the members of the Trinity, the word "Trinity" is not found in the Bible. It's a construct of the Christian faith. The early church leaders studied all the references to God, Jesus, and Spirit in the Bible and tried to put words around how they experienced God in each of those forms. It took them 300+ years after the death and resurrection of Jesus to do this, and we are still arguing about the creeds to this day. But that's a topic for a different forum, and it's not one that stirs my passion. What does stir my passion is a day set aside to celebrate God, simply and purely – just God in his and her divine Self. And that's what we do today.

Many scholars and theologians have attempted to describe the mystery of a Trinitarian God. The Trinity is like St. Patrick's shamrock with three leaves but one stem. God is like water that can have three forms. There's even an analogy to an egg. But all fall short, because all, even our creeds, are no more than our meager attempt to put words around how we are drawn into relationship with God and each other. And that fact, that God is relationship and connection is Trinitarian faith. The Trinity is a lens through which we can imagine the Kingdom of God, not as a place or thing, but as our relationship and connection with God and all of creation.

Think about the places, situations, and people you are drawn to in love. Think about how your love and appreciation and joy for any of those things has the capacity to grow beyond what you ever could have imagined. Think about how it is that you're sure you can't love someone more than you did yesterday, but today you do. And what about those times when you've dealt with more pain and heartbreak and anguish than you thought you could endure, but you made it through? Where did that strength come from? Where is it coming from right now? Why does it feel so absolutely wonderful to be gathered here together, in this space, at this moment?

All of these feelings and experiences are what they are because God is relationship. And in our connectedness with each other, we experience God. We experience the Kingdom.

The icon on the front of your bulletins, or included in the PDF you received by email yesterday, is one created by a Russian artist named Andrei Rublev in the 15<sup>th</sup> century. It is the most famous of all Russian icons and I commend it to you as a powerful devotional tool. There is much more detail about this bit of art that can add to your experience of it. But for now, all you really need to see is that here we have the Godhead, seated around a table in a scene of intimate and infinite hospitality. The three are deeply engaged with each other, but the figure on the right is also opening the circle in a gesture toward the empty place at the front of the table. If you look carefully, just below the chalice, there is a rectangle. Some art historians believe that in Rublev's original work that spot held a piece of reflective metal, a mirror. Into this powerful scene of intimate connection between Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, a fourth is being invited. You, the observer, reflected in the mirror, are welcomed into this Relationship which has been from the beginning, is now, and shall be forever. Our place in this relationship is one we can experience or ignore, but not avoid.

Mystic Meister Eckhart maintains that there is a spark of divine nature in each of us. And Indian-born teacher Eknath Easwaran adds that Life's real and highest goal . . . [is] to discover this spark of the divine that is in our hearts. . . . When we realize this goal, we discover simultaneously that the divinity within ourselves is one and the same in all—all individuals, all creatures, all of life.<sup>1</sup>

The Trinity is the way God chooses to make God's self known. Jesus is a unique expression of God's love, as is the Spirit. And each of us experience the mystery and reality of God in unique ways. It doesn't matter how you experience the presence of God in your life. What is important is that you learn to see the presence of God in your experiences. That presence is real. And that is why we gather and pray and bless and baptize in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

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<sup>1</sup> Eknath Easwaran, *Original Goodness: A Commentary on the Beatitudes* (Nilgiri Press: 1989, 1996), 9.