

**St. Paul's Anglican Church**  
**Trinity Sunday; June 16, 2019**  
**John 3:1 to 15**

**The Rev. Tom Burr**

In last week's gospel, after promising to send the Holy Spirit to believers (John 14:23), Jesus said, **if a man loves me, he will obey me and my Father will love him; and we will come to him.** This being Father's Day, we should note that whereas earthly fathers may desire to love with a perfect love, only our Father God is capable of perfect love. His words **we will come to him** are appropriate for this Trinity Sunday. The three persons of the Trinity are One God; if we receive One, we receive all; it is God's version of what Verizon and Comcast call "bundling."

Though the Feast of the Trinity was instituted in the tenth century and spread quickly through the churches in western Europe, it was not officially sanctioned in the Roman Church until 1334. The Popes resisted making it a specific feast day because it was not based on an historic event, like Christmas and Easter, and they maintained that every Sunday Eucharist was a celebration of God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Ghost.

The concept of One God consisting of three distinct but somehow connected persons took several centuries to develop. The process became very complicated as the bishops tried to agree on who Jesus is, and who He is not. After four gatherings of Christian bishops from around the world, called Councils, our statement of beliefs was pretty-much finalized.

The concept of the Trinity, One God but three Persons, is extremely complex and beyond human understanding. (What do you call a person who keeps talking when people are no longer listening? A preacher talking about the minute theological details of the Trinity!) Sometimes it has been simplified by saying the Father made us, the Son saved us, and the Holy Spirit makes us holy. God the Father created the universe and everything in it;

God the Son redeemed mankind by dying on the cross for our sins; and God the Holy Ghost dwells within us guiding us to do right. In our readings we will see this simplification, while true, does not present the whole story. (But we will skip many details!)

Our Old Testament reading is the beginning of Genesis (1:1-2:3), and when we consider the Bible's first book, it is natural to think about the creation story. We remember God saying **Let there be light: and there was light.** We recall God calling into existence water and land and the stars in the sky. We think of the creation of plants and animals and finally of Adam and Eve.

**In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. And the earth was without form; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.** Is God the Father creator of the universe? Yes, He is; but we just heard that God the Holy Spirit was also active in the process. And, St. John tells us God the Son was also very much involved, so, saying God the Father created the universe is accurate, but not complete.

Our Old Testament reading recounts the beginning of all physical existence, and the epistle (Rev. 4:1-11) gives us a glimpse of heaven near the end times. It begins with St. John saying **a door was opened in heaven, and a voice said, Come up, and I will show you things which must be hereafter.** Since we believe the door to heaven was opened to all believers through Jesus' sacrifice, resurrection and ascension, it is natural to think this voice calling John to heaven is the voice of our Savior.

And, as John's vision became clearer, he saw **a throne, and one sat on the throne;** He saw God the Father in all his glory. At the end of our reading, four living creatures and twenty-four elders fell **down before him that sat on the throne.** As they worshipped God, they sang, **you are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power; for you have created all things.**

This short song of praise and worship has two awesome implications for us. God cares for us, and though we face tough times in this life, He is still very much in control. By his power,

He will defeat all evil. The second point: God is worthy of glory and honor. By his will, He created us; we are not an accident! Our destiny is to worship Him, enjoying his love and glory for all eternity. In our gospel reading (John 3:1-15), we see how all this was made possible.

As Jesus was going about his business of saving the world, not everyone recognized that his ministry was from God, let alone that He is God. This lack of recognition was prevalent among the Jewish rulers, but one of them, **Nicodemus, came to Jesus by night, and said, Rabbi, we know you are a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that you do except God be with him.** Old Nicodemus senses that Jesus was sent by God and is not your typical holy man; but here is what he does not understand.

He was baffled when Jesus said, **Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.** To Jewish leaders, salvation came by obeying the law; Jesus taught salvation comes by being “Born again”; by faith accepting Him as Lord and Savior, and by being reborn through the receipt of the Holy Spirit.

Nicodemus knew Jesus was sent by God; but he did not know that Christ actually **came down from heaven;** and He, as God the Son, always existed with God the Father and God the Holy Ghost. Neither of the three persons of the Trinity were made or created; they always were.

In the last sentence of the gospel, our Lord gives us the simplified version of his role; **the Son of man must be lifted up, so whoever believes in him should not perish, but have eternal life.** Jesus Christ must be lifted up, nailed to a cross and die for our sins. It is through our faith in Him, that our confessed sins are forgiven and we are promised eternal life in heaven.

The Trinity existed in eternity past; and will exist forever. The difference in their pre-creation existence and their forever existence is that, the Trinity and the angels will have lots of company because through our faith in Jesus Christ we are assured our destiny is to be with God the Father, God the Son and the God

the Holy Ghost, worshipping them and enjoying their love and glory for all eternity.

Now unto God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost, be ascribed all might, majesty, power, dominion, and glory, both now and evermore. Amen.

Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.