

## Sermon 1 on Trinity – 30<sup>th</sup> May 2021. Tregear

Intro – I've always been struck by the fact that relationships are so important for all of us. And you'll all say, "Yes, Dave, tell us something new – of course relationships are important. But think about it . Why? Why do we have that longing for others to like us; to belong to the group; why get upset if we're left out; why are almost every movie or book about how people relate to others. I'm always struck that one of the worst punishments is solitary confinement, where you do not have any contact with any other human being. People go mad in this situation. I find it quite amusing that academics in universities have done studies about relationships. And they've come to the conclusion that humans need other humans. We are relational beings. Well, I could have told you that without surveying 1000 people. But it highlights something I want to emphasise this morning. **We are made for relationship** – right in the beginning God made us in his image; in fact God made us relational beings just like him. God right from the start was and is a relational God.

Let's start with the account Georgina read from Luke 3 – Jesus is in the Jordan river, he is getting baptised by John the Baptist.

And God spoke out these words – **"This is my son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased."** God the Father only speaks out loud like this 2 times in the New Testament. What does he say about Jesus? What does he show us about himself?

2 main things: God is a Father and God is loving

**1. This is my son.** – He is a Father and this Jesus is his son. Yes, he was born into the world, but he existed before time. He has always been with the Father. He was not created – he just was there with the Father and the Holy Spirit.

When God says these words he is saying I have a relationship with Jesus. We learn here something significant about God, that he is a Father. For some of you, you had good fathers

who loved you and cared for you, but some of you your fathers were not kind, they were even cruel, not just, they spoke badly about you. So when you hear the word Father you do not like it. God is a Father who loves us deeply; in fact he loved us so much that he was willing that his own son who he loved so much should die for us. God is the very best Father.

**2. Whom I love** – the Father could have said, “He is powerful, healer, teacher, but no he is my son and I love him. The most important thing about him is that he is loved. The key thing is that the Father loves the Son. The Father LOVES the Son. The Father is not worried about what he has achieved, or what he is going to do or how amazing he is – he just loves him. I also sense something very special here; here there is a Father’s heart which is breaking. “I love this Son, I love him so much it hurts. This is my Son who will die....who will be separated from me. I love him.” The distinctive quality is love. Father is saying, “I love him – that’s all.”

**3. The Holy Spirit is there as well.** God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit are all present at this special moment. Today is Trinity Sunday as Ash has pointed out. And as we said out loud in the Apostles Creed, we reminded each other that we believe in God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, three persons in one.

We believe that there is only one God. But we also believe that there are 3 persons in God. When we were in Pakistan people would say to us, “Oh you worship 3 gods.” And we would try to explain this and we would find it difficult. Or we felt a bit embarrassed. I want to tell you this morning that this is a most important truth and we do not need to feel embarrassed about this – in fact we want to proclaim it and let me tell you why.

Let’s look further at what it means for us that the Father is loving and love being at the centre of the Father’s being. The Father is the Father of the eternal son, and he finds his very identity, his Fatherhood, in loving and giving out his life and being to the Son. That is why it is important to note that the Son is the eternal Son. **There was never a time when he didn’t exist.** If there was then God is a completely different sort of being. If there was once a time when the Son didn’t exist then there was once a time when the Father was not yet a Father.

And if that is the case, then once upon a time God was not loving since all by himself he would have had nobody to love.

The Father loves the Son but the Son also loves the Father – he delights and joys in doing his Father's will. The father and the Son love each other not as a duty or even a response, they just can't help loving – it is their nature.

So let's consider a bit more what it means when we say there are 3 persons in the Godhead:  
If God is just one person – he has nobody to love

If God is only 2 persons – God might be loving but the 2 persons are just infatuated with each other – they don't have to think about anyone else.

Now if there are 3 persons, there is a whole different dynamic – here, now, love is shared with joy – it's happy, healthy and secure. Each person of the godhead is promoting each other. So the Son is saying to the Father, Look at the Holy Spirit; look how he guides the church into all truth; look how he trains them in godliness; how he convicts them of sin; how he loves them. The Holy Spirit says to the Father, look at the Son, look at how he willingly humbled himself and gave himself to die on the cross. For all eternity they are pouring themselves into one another. And the Son is saying to the Holy Spirit, Look at the Father, look at how much he loves me and is willing to give me up to come into the world to die.

No one member of the Trinity acts without all the members of the Trinity being there.

They act separately yet they are all there in each action.

The beauty is that God opens up this relationship to us and we'll be talking about that more in 2 weeks time.

In Pakistan the God of Islam was powerful, he must be obeyed. But only in Christianity do we know that God is love. It's not only that he is loving (which he is!), but that he **IS** love. From

eternity past self-giving love has been part of the essence of who God is. And this can only happen if God is three persons -- Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

If God is just one person (that means there is only one person of the Godhead), then until God created other beings there was no love, since love is something that one person has for another. This means that a one person God was power, sovereignty, and greatness from all eternity, but not love. Love then would not be the essence of God, nor would it be at the heart of the universe. God would just be powerful.

However, if God is triune (three persons), then loving relationships in community are the centre of reality.

When people say, "God is love," I think they mean that love is extremely important, or that God really wants us to love. But in the Christian conception, God really has love as his essence. Have a read of 1 John 4 to see this. If God was just one person he couldn't have been loving for all eternity. Ultimate reality is a community of persons who know and love one another.

The Father, Son and Spirit, while distinct persons, are absolutely inseparable from each other. Not confused, but undividable. They are who they are together. They always ARE together, and thus they always WORK together. The Father is not "more" than the Son or the Spirit, as if he had once existed or could exist without them. They are equal with each other but they have different roles.

What does this mean for me living today?

1. I know that God loves me. I am special to him. When I call out to him and ask him to forgive me he takes me in as his child. He wants to show his love to me in so many special ways.
2. We have a special message to take to our neighbours. They can know God; they can have a relationship with God. God wants to be their Father. God wants to shower his

love on to them. Will they accept his love? Don't be worried or ashamed that you worship one God who is made up of three persons. Because he **IS** three persons we know that he **IS** a loving God and we can experience his love in our lives.

God says to us I put you into family when you were born. Straight away you were put into a relationship with father, mother, brother, sister, grandma, grandpa. At our very core we're made for relationship with God and out of that flows our relationship to other people. The whole Bible is the story of God bringing back a people into relationship with himself, the relationship that was broken in the garden of Eden. You want to know what it means to live in relationship. God says I do it every moment of every day. God as one being and three persons is at the core of who God is – God is in perfect relationship Father with Son with Holy Spirit. Love is the essence of their relationship. I will go so far as to say If there was no Trinity, no three persons, we would not know what it means to love. So I want to finish with what Paul prays in Ephesians chapter 3, that Georgina read out:

**NIV** - <sup>14</sup> For this reason I kneel before the Father, <sup>15</sup> from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name. <sup>16</sup> I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, <sup>17</sup> so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, <sup>18</sup> may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, <sup>19</sup> and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

So a few things to notice here. Firstly, Paul kneels before the Father, ok, there's one person of the Trinity – and the Father is in charge of everything. And then as he prays about the Father strengthening us with his power he says that this would be coming to us through the Holy Spirit in our inner being, so that Christ, Jesus, would live in our hearts. All three persons of the Trinity are involved. And what is the key thing Paul is praying for – that the Ephesian Christians, and us, would know how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ. No one person in the Trinity is more important than the other. And in v.19 – if we know this love

that is beyond our knowledge, we will be filled with all the fullness of God. Heavy stuff!! But how amazing. All members of the Trinity are involved in making God known to us and in living in and through us. And we will learn more about this in 2 weeks time when we have one more dive into the Trinity. We'll look at how God has revealed himself to us as the Trinity in the Old Testament and New Testament and some more ways of how that impacts the way we live as God's people. The Bible Study this week will have a quiz to get you thinking and prepare us for our second time in the Trinity.

We're going to close with a prayer that's from the lectio 365 app. Let's say this together:

Father, help me to live this day to the full, being true to You, in every way.

Jesus, help me to give myself away to others, being kind to everyone I meet.

Spirit, help me to love the lost, proclaiming Christ in all I do and say. Amen