

Sermon 2 on Trinity – June 13, 2021. Tregear

Review – Two weeks ago we spent some time thinking about the fact that God is One being yet three persons. Something we find hard to comprehend but we also realised what this tells us about God – the God is love. No other god is like our God. All that we know about God is what he has revealed to us. Remember we said that for God to be loving there must be more than one person. If God is all alone, on his own, he cannot love – he has no one to love. But because he IS three persons we know that he is loving.

Earlier we read together the Nicene Creed. It's very similar to the Apostles Creed. This was a statement by Christians about 300 years after Jesus of what they believed, of what the Bible teaches us, of what God has revealed to us. The early Christians debated amongst themselves all that they had learnt about Jesus. Was he fully human and fully divine at the same time; Apostles creed came out of this period. And the Nicene Creed added some extra things just to make it really clear that Jesus was fully human and fully God at the same time and all the time while he was here on earth. They wanted to emphasize that Jesus had existed from the very beginning WITH the Father and the Holy Spirit. And he wasn't less than the Father, so you have the statement, "God from God, Light from Light, true God. Begotten, not made." he wasn't created by the Father, but his role was to be the Son. The Father's role was to be the Father. But as the Creed says, Jesus was "of the same essence as the Father." And then with the Holy Spirit the Nicene Creed says, "Yes, he always existed as Lord, because he is God and he is the giver of life." And his role is to "proceed from the Father and the Son" – he goes out as they send him to tell people about God, to bring people to relationship with God. Is he any less than the Son and the Father. No the Creed says "with the Father and the Son he (the Holy Spirit) is worshipped and glorified." He is worshipped as God by us just like we worship the Father and the Son. The mystery of one God and three persons. Each person of the trinity has a distinct role but they do not work separately – they work as One.

Genesis 1:26 - When God says, “Let us make man in **our** image, after **our** likeness”, it shows us that God is not alone. This word “our” is not the numerical value but a coming together of multiple components - so as in a cluster of grapes you would refer to the cluster as one. So now in Genesis 1:26 the three personed God is now ready to do a remarkable thing – to make man in their own image. This will be someone who can relate, who can love, who can forgive, whose love will not be able to be contained.

Made in God’s image – to rule and to enjoy all that God has made. Interesting to note how God lavishes everything on man and woman – Be fruitful, multiply, I give you every seed-bearing plant; he gives all the green plants for food for the animals that he has put on the earth. God gives abundantly. In 2:18 God creates woman – again so that man will not be alone, he provides the best helper – the NIV modestly says , “a helper suitable for him”. We might think that a helper is below the other person. But this Hebrew word for “helper” is most frequently used of God when it describes God as our helper – the help given is more like rescuing; God is the helper who is more powerful and able, in fact able to rescue. Now that puts a different slant on how we view women doesn’t it men? So woman is more than suitable – she’s the perfect companion. In fact there is another indicator of our God-image-likeness in that when the man and the woman are married they become one – just like the Father, Son and the HS. This oneness is a special union that God enjoys – he shares it with us, that we might also enjoy him and be a reflection of the oneness he has.

But marriage doesn’t last. It’s just for here on earth. There is no marriage in heaven. Jesus says this very clearly. There is something quite remarkable that Jesus says in the passage we read today from John 17. I don’t know whether you picked it up. This passage indicates that all followers and believers of Jesus are in a special relationship with the Trinity.

Jesus is praying for his disciples on the night before he is to be crucified. This is in the beginning of Chapter 17 and then from v.20 Jesus prays for everyone else who will believe in Jesus through the disciples’ message.

Read from v.20. He firstly prays that “they(his followers) may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you.” That’s a wonderful prayer. It would be great if we would have the same unity amongst us believers as the Father has with the Son. But then Jesus says, “May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me.” May they be in **us** – what can that mean other than that Jesus is expressing the longing of him and the Father that we would be in the Trinity. What an amazing truth. God wants us somehow to be with him, Father, Son and Holy Spirit sharing life as they share life.

But wait, there’s more! Jesus goes on to confirm this with the words, “I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be ONE as WE ARE ONE. I in them and you in me.” Are you hearing what I am hearing? Somehow, as the Spirit comes into us having done his work of turning our proud, rebellious hearts around, we enter into fellowship with the Trinity. If we truly believe this, not only does it impact the way two people relate in marriage but also, even more significantly, how the church, the body, that is now “one” in Christ relate. God is transforming his people, the church, back into the image in which he created us. To be made in the “image of God” is to share in the characteristics of God – an unselfish love; a deep sense that we’re special and accepted; an ability to relate at the deepest level. Surely this means that not only in marriage, but in the church, the characteristics of the Trinity will be borne out as the Spirit continues to work in his people.

So what does this mean for me today, sitting here in church in Tregear?

a)Paul says that we’re now part of Christ’s body. There are various sections in his letters where he talks about this. Each one of us is part of the body when we come into God’s family. We don’t say, “Oh I’m not part of the body. I think I’ll go off by myself. Have you ever seen a leg decide that it isn’t part of the body and so it detached itself and walks off. Ridiculous! But this is the same with us at church.

Val you're part of the body; Joan you're part of the body; Noela, Ben, Mary-Jean. In John 15 Jesus says that he is the vine and we are the branches. It's a picture a bit like the body. If we are in God's family we are a branch. We don't have to make ourselves a branch we just are a branch. Jesus says when you're in my family YOU ARE A BRANCH. And this verse in John 17 adds to this and says that we are part of the Trinity – not because we're good people; or we're religious or anything we've done. But because the Holy Spirit has worked in our hearts and we've believed the truth and we've accepted Jesus' call to "Come" into the family.

b) Paul has another expression which makes a lot of sense now we've read John 17. Paul says "in Christ":

*Romans 6:1 - In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God **in Christ** Jesus.*

*Romans 8:1 - there is now no condemnation for those who are **in Christ** Jesus,*

*Rom 12:5 - so **in Christ** we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.*

*In Rom 16:3 - Greet Priscilla and Aquila, my co-workers **in Christ** Jesus.*

*1 Cor.1:2 - To the church of God in Corinth, to those sanctified **in Christ** Jesus and called to be his holy people*

There are at least 30-40 more references from Paul but Peter also uses this expression when he says, *Peace to all of you who are **in Christ**. 1 Peter 5:14.*

These guys are speaking about a new reality of life for those who are in God's family – they are in the Trinity, they are "in Christ".

And here's another thought: We're not just imitating Christ; we're not just trying to be like Jesus, it's far richer than that, we're "living in Christ". We bear fruit that is not the result of our imitation of Christ's life but of our being incorporated into Christ and his resurrection life in the Spirit. Somehow, he's living his life in us. Is your head spinning a bit? It's easy to say the words here but for this truth to be lived in reality in our lives.

c)Technically speaking the ultimate goal for a Christian isn't going to heaven per se when we die. It is to be with Christ and to live on the new earth with him, with Christ as our ruler (Rev 21:1-5). Right now we are "in Christ", we are in the Trinity. I hear the expression, "He was too young to die". As God's people we have a different attitude to death and sickness. Yes, we hate the suffering that they bring; the pain that they bring. And I don't want to play down the pain of losing a loved one; God knows this as he experienced the suffering on the cross. This world is not our home. We were made for relationship with God; to enjoy God; to be "in Christ"; to be one just as the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are one. So Paul cries out, "Death where is your sting!"; we're going home. God wants to take us home. This earth is not my home; this is not the place where I find ultimate meaning in life.

You know that feeling of loss; that pain. There will be none of that after we die here on earth; we will be with Christ in a place where there is no more crying, nor more goodbyes; no more pain. Now, we can have fellowship with the Trinity, but there is still our sinful person and there is still the effects of sin here on this earth. But One day; one day – we will have perfect fellowship, a relationship that we can only dream of now.

As we've looked at the Trinity I hope you've just begun to see how significant it is that we believe in a God who is one but three persons. One last thing. As we focus on God we can't escape the fact that we see God's love displayed most clearly on the cross. The crucifixion of Jesus is ugly and horrible and yet it's probably the clearest expression of God's love and God's character. Because of the cross we see that God is not far off and not involved with us, but that he is committed to us and near to us in our suffering. The God we serve is the God who serves. There's so much to say here

but I just want to say that even at the moment of deepest darkness, God the Father and God the Son were acting together to bring about a reconciliation with the world. Our salvation is achieved entirely by God.

The cross is also a reminder to us that we should not be surprised if we suffer. Once again, the doctrine of the Trinity gives us practical help.

Suffering plays a large part in the idea of our union with Christ. It is by sharing in Christ's sufferings that we may hope to share in his glory also. In our feebleness, this Spirit of Christ, the Holy Spirit, helps us, interceding for us and drawing us to the Father (Rom.8:29) speaking our groans for us. In this way, our connection with the Trinity offers a unique comfort in time of trial. We do not suffer alone, nor do we suffer in vain. There is purpose in our suffering.

I better leave it there. Two last quotes.

“The being of God is not an abstract idea but a fulness of essence, an infinite abundance of life, whose diversity unfolds to highest unity.” It's so difficult to find words to describe all the different facets of the Trinity but Herman Bavinck is able, here, to describe a relationship that is causing the others to blossom and flourish, that is complete in, and of, itself. There is a richness of community beyond our imagining! I think it was Paul Tripp who said, “The triune God is not a God who hoards his life, but one who gives it away.”

God is love; he is in perfect unity with each person in the Trinity. He loves us sacrificially. We can be included in this Trinity and be one with God. We're still individuals but somehow we're linked in with the amazingly perfect unity of the Trinity. And one day when we've left this earth we will experience this in a way that we could never imagine with God, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.