

Sermon ☩ June 12, 2022

John 16:12-15

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Today is the only Sunday of the church year when we commemorate—lift up—a theological concept. This is the day when we consider the one God who is known to us in three different ways—as Father . . . as Son . . . as Holy Spirit.

It can be a difficult thing—delving into the endless intricacies and problems of explaining a doctrine. And this particular doctrine seems to be an almost impossible thing to believe.

It can be a difficult thing to believe something that is impossible to believe. So it was for Alice . . . of *Alice in Wonderland* fame.

*"One can't believe impossible things,"* said Alice to the White Queen.

*"I daresay you haven't had much practice,"* said the Queen. *"When I was your age, I always did it for half an hour a day. Why, sometimes I've believed as many as six impossible things before breakfast."*

Many think that the Trinity is the kind of thing that the White Queen believed before breakfast—impossible and absurd. It's easy to get that impression from the Athanasian Creed:

*And the Catholic faith is this: That we worship one God in Trinity, and Trinity in Unity, neither confounding the Persons, nor dividing the Substance.*

*For there is one Person of the Father, and another of the Son, and another of the Holy Ghost.*

*But the Godhead of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, is all one, the Glory equal, the Majesty co-eternal.*

*Such as the Father is, such is the Son, and such is the Holy Ghost.*

*And yet they are not three eternal, but one eternal.*

*As also there are not three incomprehensibles, nor three uncreated, but one uncreated, and one incomprehensible.*

That should be incomprehensible enough for anyone.

Trinity Sunday begs the question: "Who is God?" or "How do we name the unnameable God?" Between 1873 and 1875, the American revivalists Dwight L. Moody and Ira D. Sankey conducted revival campaigns in Scotland, England, and Ireland. Once Moody had the

opportunity to speak to a group of Scottish school children. "*Boys and girls,*" Moody began, "*who is God?*" Now, American children might sit silently, avert their eyes, hem and haw, and come up with some cute but theologically bizarre answers to that question. But with one voice these Scottish children responded, "*God is a Spirit, infinite, eternal, and unchangeable in his being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness and truth.*" Moody was completely taken aback. What he did not realize was that in nineteenth century Scotland, the *Shorter Westminster Catechism* was one of the principal textbooks of Scottish children.

So . . . *Who is God?* Moses asked this question in awe before the bush that burned but was not consumed. "*If I come to the Israelites and say to them, 'The God of your ancestors has sent me to you,' and they ask me, 'What is his name?' what shall I say to them?"*

One of the Christian answers to the-question "Who is God?" is that God is Trinity. God is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit *or* Creator, Word, and Spirit. St. Augustine explained the Trinity in terms of love. The Trinity, he wrote, is the Lover, the Beloved, and the Love that binds them together.

Another theologian explained the Trinity in terms of communication: God is silence, monologue, and dialogue. God *-the one God-* is made known to us in three separate yet connected entities . . . we call this combination the Trinity.

How does it all work? I don't know. There are great scholarly works which delve deeply into the mystery of the doctrine of the Trinity . . . which dissect it and examine it . . . which attempt to understand that which is not totally understandable. And do these writings help us to better understand God? I'm not sure.

Please hear me, I'm not saying that scholarly endeavors are not important, especially when it comes to our examination of scripture. One of the great realities of our faith must be that some aspects of faith are a mystery. And that's alright . . . as a matter of fact it's wonderful.

God understands our need for variety. So it is that God is made known to us in different ways and forms. Three uniquely different facets, but all part of that which sustains us.

Given a specific circumstance of life, we may feel the need to draw closer to one dimension of the Trinity over another. One time it may be God, the loving parent; another God, the Son / the sibling; still another God as Spirit.

And when we have a need to connect with one of these dimensions of God, we don't care how it works . . . just that *it* works . . . that God is there for us . . . in different forms . . . different persons. All three sustain us . . . all three feed us. Distinct, yet the same. Separate, yet one.

This the day that is set aside to commemorate the Holy Trinity. It is not a day to get bogged down with heavy theological debate. It is a day to simply rejoice and give thanks and praise God. To praise the one God who loves us so much that this God is made known to us in different ways and forms.

This is a day to acknowledge unashamedly that some things about our faith are a mystery . . . that we don't have all of the answers. And that, too, is okay.

For God is greater and wiser than we . . . it is not our time to know all of the answers. The essence of the Trinity is that as God is made known to us . . . in whatever form . . . we are fed / sustained.

Blessed be such a God as this. Amen.