

Trinity Sunday, St. John's Olney, 16 June 2019  
The Reverend Henry P. McQueen  
Proverbs 8:1-4, 22-31; Romans 5:1-5; John 16:12-15; Canticle 13

S.D.G.

In a previous parish the Rector was offering an adult Bible study on the topic of shame, so you can imagine that the chosen Scripture passages were quite challenging. The Rector and I had very different teaching styles, he liked to provide answers, I liked to ask questions and give space for the participants to wrestle with the passage. One evening he was not able to teach so I was called upon to lead the class.

In our discussion I would not provide answers, but rather I would ask questions, and there was one participant who always had an answer; and I quickly came to realize that he always had the same answer. Regardless the passage, regardless the question the answer always came back as "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son..."

This gentleman was much like the character who pops up at sporting events with the multicolored wig and sign proclaiming in big letters "John 3:16". I hate to break it to you, but there are no easy answers, nor is John 3:16 the answer to every question.

Having worked in manufacturing for a significant period of time I have witnessed a number of situations that can be summarized with the following story. Manufacturing lines can be impressive to watch. With computer aided design, integrated processes, pneumatics, and sensors beyond count, they can create amazing products and leave you wondering "how do they do that?". And it is all well and good while it is working.

But then comes the time when the production lines comes to a crashing halt. Dozens of workers are standing around scratching their heads, maintenance is working furiously, and the managers and supervisors are all screaming at how costly the shutdown is. So after a few days of very costly frustration the expert is called in.

Looking over the situation the expert declares, I can fix it, it will be up and running before the end of the day; but it will cost you \$15,000. Management quickly gives the approval and the expert walks over to the machine, lifts a cover and pushes a button.

With that the lights flash and the machines begin to spring to life. The production line is up and running in minutes.

The expert hands the manager a bill for \$15,000. With that the manager proclaims that he is not paying \$15k to push a button. The expert replies, you are correct, you are not paying me \$15,000 to push a button, you are paying me \$15,000 to know which button to push.

Today is Trinity Sunday. On this day many ill advised clergy will try to explain the incomprehensible Holy Trinity within the bounds of a 10-15 minute sermon. They will look for quick answers and use their “expertise” to push the exact button that is needed for all to understand what is truly a mystery. The Creed of Saint Athanasius, found with in the Historical Documents of the Book of Common Prayer, (pg 864) uses the word “incomprehensible” at least 5 times in its description of the Holy Trinity. In exploring the Trinity John 3:16 is only a small part of the answer, and within the boundaries of a sermon, or even a lifetime, none of us will fully comprehend the Holy Trinity, for it is incomprehensible.

What we do know is that we have been given a gift of the Holy Spirit. As Jesus ascended to heaven he said that the Holy Spirit would come to guide us and teach us. The celebration of Pentecost is the celebration of the gift of the Holy Spirit, but that is not our first and only gift.

Scripture begins with creation and our first gift. God so loved the world that God created the world. God created the world out of love. And that is our first gift – creation and God’s love.

It is important to know that God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit were all present at creation. We know this from Scripture and the words of Genesis: “a wind from God swept over the face of the waters” (Gen 1:2) And we know this from Saint John’s Gospel, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God.” (Jn 1:1-2)

That was our first gift, the gift of creation and God’s love.

Our next gift was the gift of covenant; God chose to be in covenant with God's people. The first covenant comes through Noah and it is a gift to every living creature on the earth; the covenant is that God will never again send a flood to destroy the earth. The sign of that covenant is the rainbow.. But the real gift is that God has chosen to be in everlasting relationship with God's people. That is our gift, to be in relationship with God.

Diane and I recently watched a documentary that highlighted some unique people and their lives in a Sicilian town. There was one character in this film who could have been either benefactor or slave owner, it was difficult to tell. He owned a chain of pizzerias and made arrangements with the Sicilian parole board and prison to train released inmates in make pizzas and running pizzerias. He was both offering a career path for troubled youth, and benefiting from the slave labor of recently released inmates. It was an interesting dichotomy. But what struck me was his view of hope; he preached to all that listened – “where there is pizza there is hope”.

Not to disparage pizza, a favorite treat, but truly – where there is God there is hope. There is hope with a God who created the heavens and earth out of love. There is hope with a God who chooses to be in covenant with us. And there is hope with a God who so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son that all the world might come to believe.

God gave God's Son to us that we might know God. It is through Jesus that we can see and know God more fully. The first disciples actually lived in God's presence, and thankfully shared the stories of those times for all the ages. Through these stories Jesus is our model for our lives. Jesus teaches us how to love, to serve, to live. It is through Jesus that we have been given the gift of knowing God. And it is through Jesus that we have been sent the gift of the Holy Spirit.

The Spirit of Truth comes to us to guide us into all truth. The Spirit of Truth, the Holy Spirit, came to the early followers of Jesus and it was through the presence of the Spirit they did not feel abandoned, rather, they were empowered to go out and share God's love with the world.

We are called to share God's love with the world just as much as the early disciples were called. And we are accompanied by the Holy Spirit just as they were. We are

called by Christ in love to live in truth and action. And that truth is manifest in our hope of sharing the glory of God.

That truth is found in the love of God. That truth is found in the life of Jesus. That truth is found in the power of the Spirit. That truth is found in the incomprehensible Holy Trinity. That truth is our hope of sharing in the glory of God.

In a time when it can be difficult to discern the truth in the world, the truth of God overshadows all. Where there is darkness the truth of God brings light.

We have hope, God has given us hope. We can see that hope in the creation of the heavens and the earth. We can see that hope through our covenant with God. We can see that hope in God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit. We have the hope of sharing the glory of God.

That hope sustains us in times good and bad, in darkness and in light. That hope is present in our lives and in the lives of anyone who opens their heart to God, because in the words of Saint Paul "God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given us."

God has given us the gift of hope. A gift of new and never ending life as is found in the Holy Trinity.

Amen,