

## **Holy Trinity Sunday – Matthew 28:16-20**

The bus pulls away and there he sits on the park bench. As a nurse sits down at the other end of the bench he says, "Hello. My name is Forrest. Forrest Gump." Then he proceeds to ask if she would like a chocolate. She doesn't take one. He in turn takes one himself saying one of the most famous movie lines, "My momma always said, 'Life is like a box of chocolates. You never know what you are going to get.'"

In a way, a box of chocolates has a trinitarian formula of its own. There is a box, inside there are chocolate shells (several of them) containing a filling of sorts. I know this might be stretching a trinitarian image.

Today is Holy Trinity Sunday. We recognize God as the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, Three-in-One, One-in-Three. Now, the Trinity that is very hard to explain. I can try and use images that have been used for years like: an apple (flesh, insides, seeds) or water (ice, steam, or water) or an egg (shell, whites, and yolk). All have three parts that make up the whole. The Trinity however is not that simple.

I want you to enter into the mystery of the Trinity today. Open yourselves to thinking about the Trinity in a different way. Trinity is a term that is not found in scriptures. What is found is the description of Jesus coming to earth as God's Son and rising from the dead and ascending to heaven as the Holy Spirit.//

God the Trinity we can also describe or name as Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier. This is a Trinitarian formula describing the nature of God. God creates. We heard the story of creation in our first lesson this morning. Creation doesn't stop with the creation story. God is constantly creating and making all things new. With each new day, God is with us creating. In the beginning of Matthew Jesus is referred to as Emmanuel, which means God is with us.

God the Redeemer, describes Jesus who saves us from ourselves and the tensions we experience because of our wrongdoings and doubt. Jesus redeems us by giving his life on the cross and rising from the grave. As Emmanuel, Jesus is with us to remind us of this when we might find our doubting overwhelming.

The Sanctifier. The resurrected Lord who ascended to heaven is also Emmanuel with us. I know that I have never had a Holy Spirit "aha" moment where I felt God's presence but he was there. At my lowest moments in life, early after my first marriage broke down God was there even though I felt like he was absent. God is with us always.

However you identify or relate to God, I hope that your imagination will help you to identify how you relate to God, on your journey of faith. ///

The gospel lesson tells us the disciples minus Judas gathered on the mountain with Jesus. Oddly enough, it took many commissioning for these disciples to get to the mountainside meeting. Earlier in chapter 28 the story is told of Mary Magdalene and Mary going to the tomb and when they see it empty being instructed by the angel to go tell the disciples and order them to go to Galilee. Jesus will meet them there. The commissioning begins at the empty tomb. The women on their way to the disciples see Jesus stop to worship him but he commissions them again, "Get to Galilee and bring those disciples with you". This is the Mary's second commission.

The disciples are just like us. They worship Jesus. Some have doubts about Jesus and some believe. It happens here at Zion too. We worship God and some of us have doubts. While the disciples were listening to Jesus and stop to worship him they received the Great Commission to go and baptize all nations in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. And Jesus desires for them to remember He is with them to the end of the ages.

We are used to the idea of baptizing in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. It is wonderful when we can baptize children or adults at Zion. It is especially meaningful today to be able to baptize Aria. During the rite of baptism we make promises. Parents, sponsors, and the congregation are

commissioned during this rite to instill and teach faith in Jesus Christ to our children.

The Great Commission calls us to baptize all nations in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. My question for 21<sup>st</sup> century Christians is “Do you think people will want to be baptized right away if you invite them to be?” My answer is no.

Our Great Commission as people of God is to invite people to experience the love, grace, and compassion of God. As God’s apostles we are called to encourage relationships of faith. God comes freely to us, and we are to give his love freely to others.

This text leads me to the never-ending question of theologians and clergy alike, “which comes first? The font or the table?” Some believe that first we must be baptized (and even confirmed) in order to go the altar for Holy Communion. Others argue that baptism is exclusionary. I proclaim everyone regardless of faith and belief is welcome at the table. When I first was ordained 23 years ago we were taught that we were to invite people forward saying, “All who are baptized and believe are welcome to receive Communion. I said that until a Jewish woman approached me after a service and asked me why I say that because she wants to come forward. I didn’t have an answer for her. I knew what Jewish

people believed and it certainly wasn't in the resurrection. I came to this conclusion. Who am I to judge? If she wants Communion, if anyone wants Communion they are welcome at the Table. And who knows maybe by their experience of God's Holy Meal they will consider baptism. Baptism isn't the only way to be part of the Body of Christ.

God creates everyone in the image of God. God does not create conditions that anyone must meet in order to be worthy to be considered part of his family. That is why it is so important to imagine and create ways for individuals to experience grace, love and community. The community projects that are taking hold here like the Emergency Response Team to help keep people warm on cold winter nights are important. The Community Garden where food is grown for the food bank, the renewed seniors exercise classes, the fellowship times: these are all ways where God is present, creating, and loving.

If being commissioned by the Lord means to be in relationship with someone else, perhaps you might consider calling someone who you haven't seen at church recently to see how they are doing.

Maybe it is a matter of offering to bring tea to one of our shut-ins and have a little visit. And who knows you might take some chocolate too.

You never know what you're going to get when you open that box. I love the caramel chocolates. The spirit usually has another surprise in store. Maybe a pecan chocolate who knows.

When we use our imagination to invite others to faith you may also receive a unknown gift from the Spirit. Relationships are like that. Relationships with God in the middle are special indeed. Thanks be to God. Amen.