



## Sermon at the Cathedral Eucharist

Trinity Sunday

12 June 2022

readings: [Proverbs 8.1-4, 22-3](#), [Romans 5.1-5](#), [John 16.12-15](#)

It won't surprise you that today, Trinity Sunday, is statistically the day most preferred by preachers for a Sunday off. Perhaps it's because they know that the Doctrine of the Trinity has created more heretics, more schisms, and more martyrs than any other doctrine and don't want to take the risk?

So what does the Trinity mean? It seems that a quick Anglican standard three-point sermon might actually be appropriate for Trinity Sunday. So here are the main ideas that we'll briefly touch on: Waiting, Wisdom in Scripture and Love.

Perhaps the meaning is in the waiting? Allow me to read the poem, 'Kneeling', by a poet I love, RS Thomas:

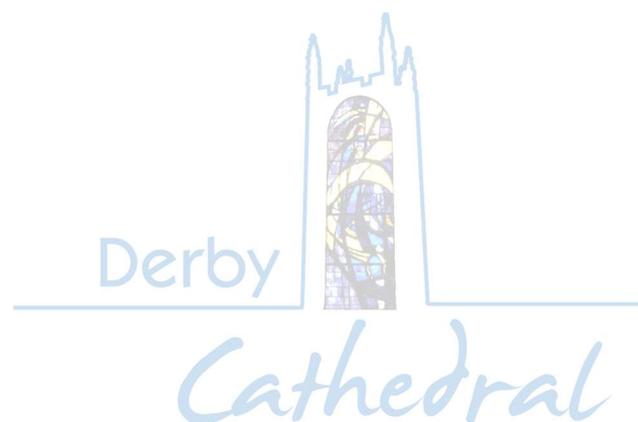
### ***Kneeling***

*Moments of great calm,  
Kneeling before an altar  
Of wood in a stone church  
In summer, waiting for God  
To speak; the air a staircase  
For silence; the sun's light  
Ringing me, as though I acted  
A great role. And the audience  
Still; all that close throng  
Of spirits waiting, as I,  
For the message.*

*Prompt me, God;  
But not yet. When I speak,  
Though it be you who speak  
Through me, something is lost.  
The meaning is in the waiting.*

*Prompt me, God;  
But not yet.  
The meaning is in the waiting.*

When leading prayers or doing a funeral visit with a bereaved family, or journeying with someone as a spiritual accompanier, or even preparing sermons, this poem reminds me that the sometimes, terrifying space before the words come together is both precious and vital.



What feels like emptiness to me has the potential to be God's inspiration...

*Prompt me, God*

*But not yet...*

*The meaning is in the waiting.*

There are many reasons why I have always loved poetry and used to love teaching it in the classroom. One of the reasons is that, like scripture, a poem demands a lot from me. Like scripture, the richest poetry isn't instantly accessible. It has a depth that allows me to come back again and again and still get something out of it. I may have to read it several times in order to digest it. I may have to speak it out loud, or hear it read, before I get a sense of its meaning. And even then, like scripture, the meaning is often quite elusive. Whose meaning do we seek? Are we looking for the poet's meaning or are we waiting for it to resonate with something deep within us? Are we imposing too much of ourselves and our own emotional baggage onto it? Do we accept the moments of ambiguity and leave parts of it a mystery?

But, with regards to the Trinity, is that just a cop-out?

That does seem to be the route many clergy take – they cite the Athanasian Creed, which tells us that the Trinity is incomprehensible and thus a mystery. And, in part, that's fine. It is a mystery and perhaps we aren't meant to completely understand it – but should we just then ignore it?

Let's move to the second point and take a quick look at the Proverbs text we read today.

*'The Lord created me at the beginning of his work,  
the first of his acts of long ago.'* (Proverbs 8.22)

We Christians cannot hear this without thinking of a key passage in the first chapter of the Gospel of John, which refers to Jesus as 'the Word':

*'In the beginning was the Word,  
and the Word was with God and the Word was God.'* (John 1.1)

And 'In the beginning' inevitably draws us back to the opening words of Genesis:

*'In the beginning,  
when God created the heavens and the earth,  
the earth was a formless void...  
while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters.'* (Genesis 1.2)

I love that the Spirit of God in Hebrew is a feminine noun (although we rarely hear God's Spirit referred to as 'she'). I am also a huge fan of Wisdom, an aspect of God, personified as a woman in the Hebrew Scriptures. As a feminist, I am delighted that we have the feminine and the masculine side by side in the Godhead, in community, in the beginning, before all things were made...

But where is Wisdom to be found today? Wisdom is to be found in the essence of our everyday lives. Like poetry and scripture, it demands our attention.

Wisdom can be found in one of the early images for the Trinity as a community, as a dance of love. Augustine said it this way: 'the Father is the One who loves, the Son is the one who is the Beloved, and the Spirit is the Love that flows between them.' In Christ, we are invited to join the dance: or in George Herbert's famous words, 'Love bade me welcome.'

And lastly, my third point...Today we find ourselves at a midway point in our travel through the Christian Year.

The texts that are before us today are not doctrinal in nature. Each text seeks to draw us not into some questions about the nature of God but seeks to draw us into life with God. Let me repeat that last phrase: into life with God. Since Advent, our focus has been on major events in the story of Jesus: his coming and manifestation, his suffering and triumph, and his gift of the Spirit. Until Advent comes again, our focus will be on what Jesus taught by word and action. Through it, we hope to learn how to live in the power the Spirit has given to us.

Today we look, not so much at what God does, as we look at who God is: the Trinity of Father, Son, and Spirit.

Even committed Christians find this hard. Because God as Trinity appears in every aspect of our faith, the truth of the Trinity seems almost too big for us to appreciate.

One theologian claimed the Trinity is for us something like the roundness of the earth.

We accept that the earth is round, but we tend not to experience the earth as round. Most of the time, we behave as though the earth were flat. To experience the earth as round requires us to have a larger perspective. And maybe that larger perspective is Love.

Julian of Norwich, a saint and a mystic of uncommon depth and insight, never approached the demonstration of God's existence or the meaning of the Trinity in structured argument like the great theologians of her age. Yet in her visions and writings, I think she came as close as anyone to understanding the God of love as the God of the Trinity. Toward the end of her life, she penned this short but profound exchange:

'Would you know your Lord's meaning?'  
she asks.

'Know it well, love was his meaning.

Who showed it to you? Love.

What did he show you? Love.

Why did he show it? For love.'

It all comes back down to love.

So, who is God today? And is there a place for the Trinity in our world? Mother Julian, in her day, found God in love, pure and simple. For all the complexity of our modern-day life, that is still where God as creator, redeemer, sanctifier is to be found. Would you know your Lord's meaning?' she asks.

'Know it well, love was his meaning.  
Who showed it to you? Love.  
What did he show you? Love.  
Why did he show it? For love.'

Amen.

***Revd Dwayne Engh, Diocesan Ordained Ministries Development Officer***