

Trinity Sunday 2021 (30.05.2021)

Romans 8: 12 - 17; John 3: 1 – 17

I guess we all know that shouldn't out the cart before the horse. A cart is just an inert object, a vehicle to convey something else. There is no dynamism, no power in a cart. It gets you nowhere unless a horse comes first. And yet we've probably all been accused at some time or another of trying to put the cart before the horse.

Each year, it seems to me, people preaching sermons on Trinity Sunday, are guilty of putting the cart before the horse; guilty of putting the doctrine of the Holy Trinity before God, rather than putting them the other way round. What people do is, they say that here is the doctrine of the holy Trinity. This is the proposition. So, listen up, put your thinking caps on and get your heads round this.

God is: one God, but three coeternal and consubstantial persons: the Father, the Son

(Jesus Christ) and the Holy Spirit. God is Father. God is Son. God is Holy Spirit. But the Father is not the Son. The Son is not the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is not the Father.

So there it is: 49 words. They can be printed out on to a piece of paper. And everything you need to know about God, everything you might ever understand about God, fits in this piece of paper.

All the awe and wonder you might ever feel contemplating an uncreated creator, who's bigger than, and previous to, anything that there is or ever has been; who created the heavens and the earth; who called you into being and knows every hair on your head; all that can be fitted on this piece of paper.

All the assurance of forgiveness and love you have ever felt; all your compassion; all your commitment to serving others and putting the needs of others before yourself, of treating others as you would want to be treated yourself; all your conviction that everybody is

worthy of respect, that the dignity of all is equal irrespective of ability or social status, of nationality or ethnicity, of skin colour or gender or sexuality; all your determination to arrest climate change and to live more simply to ensure the sustainability of the earth; all that can be fitted on this piece of paper.

All the healing and wholeness you've ever received; all the empowerment you've ever known to be able to do something you would never have been able to do in your own strength; the sensation of being fully alive, of inhabiting the present moment with an absolute intensity; all the surge along your veins, whether it be of exhilaration or serenity, when you stand on top of a mountain, or watch a sunset, or are part of a rugby team, or get enveloped in a piece of music, or share moments of physical intimacy with someone you love; all that can be fitted on this piece of paper.

Because all that is God. And this is what God is. 49 words:

one God, but three coeternal and consubstantial persons: the Father, the Son (Jesus Christ) and the Holy Spirit. God is Father. God is Son. God is Holy Spirit. But the Father is not the Son. The Son is not the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is not the Father.

And if you don't understand that, if you're too thick to get your head round that, you can't be a proper Christian.

Well, I tell you what. I don't give two figs about getting your head round the doctrine of the Holy Trinity. We can throw away this piece of paper. I don't care whether you understand what three coeternal and consubstantial persons in the unity of one godhead means or not. Because this isn't a theology lecture: it's a sermon. I'm not trying to turn anyone into a systematic theologian. Don't get me wrong, if one of the young people here today turns out to be a Professor of Theology at an esteemed

The Revd Matthew Pollard, Rector of Bridlington Priory

university, and writes a book “that” thick about the doctrine of the Holy Trinity and in the front it says it’s dedicated to Matthew Pollard who was our Rector and really got me excited about Trinitarian theology, I would feel 10 feet tall. But it’s not what I’m standing here for.

All I’m standing here for is to encourage you to accept the invitation to be a follower of Jesus; to walk with him on the Way. That’s the Way with a capital W. It’s the way of peace and justice and reconciliation. It’s the way of being put right: being put right with ourselves and with the integrity of creation. It’s the way of knowing ourselves to be loved by a heavenly father; of discovering that we are lovable and capable of loving others. It’s a way of being set free from all our neuroses and destructiveness. It’s a way of finding within ourselves a spirit of personal empowerment and a peace that passes all understanding.

And if you happen to have the sort of mind that can see patterns and systems; and if in that description of the Way you can see emerging, almost like a diagram if you like, the idea of going through Jesus to the Father in the power of the Holy Spirit; and you say to yourself, hey presto, Matthew’s describing the Holy Trinity, congratulations. You found the vehicle that conveys a snappy formula that summarises the experience of power of the living God. The cart is in its right place, behind the horse.

And if you can’t see that: never mind. God’s got more important things for you to do in his service.

Amen.