

Sermon on John Sixteen
Trinity Sunday May 25, 2013

In today's Gospel reading Jesus tells his disciples, "I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now." What a perfect reading for today, Trinity Sunday; a day when we celebrate a doctrine of the church. It's an important doctrine; one that led to the development of our creeds. It's a doctrine that tries to put into words how we experience our God.

We as Christians experience our one God in a way that is different from the Jewish and Muslim faiths. We state that we believe that our one God is experienced in three different ways; as God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. We use our language to try to describe how we experience this God, but our words are woefully inadequate!

During my senior year in seminary one of the courses I took was on the Trinity. In one of the books we had to read, the author begins by describing the heresies that came into being as the early Christian church was trying to put into words how it experienced this God. As I read about those wrong beliefs and the reasoning behind them they actually started to make sense! After awhile it was hard to tell what was true and what was a heresy—my brain felt like it was going to explode!

The doctrine of the Trinity is a truth that is deep and full of mystery. It requires the wisdom and discernment that comes to us only in an ongoing walk of faith. A walk of faith with the Spirit of Truth that Jesus promised us; who will guide us into the truth. Our walk in faith, our journey for truth is a never-ending one. That journey leads to the essence of the Trinity; one of relationship and unity.

The relationship between Father, Son and Holy Spirit is one of love and equality. One person of the Trinity isn't greater than the other. The love that is shared between them is so great that it couldn't be contained within God; so God created humanity and all of creation with which to share that love. It is the Spirit that invites us into this relationship with God and with each other.

Martin Luther states that what we can know of God is what is shown to us in Jesus Christ. Luther was assured of his salvation because of the God that he saw manifested in Jesus. Here was a God that comes to us in weakness and humility. This God was born as a babe to a poor Jewish teenager; lived the life of a working man and died as a criminal. And yet, this is the one that God raised from the dead! This is the hope that Paul writes about in our reading from Corinthians—a hope that because of Jesus' suffering and death, our suffering isn't God-forsaken!

God doesn't desire or cause our suffering. God doesn't delight in our suffering, but God promises to be with us in our suffering and to work through our suffering whenever possible for a greater good; to work in and through all things to redeem our suffering by joining it to Christ's own. There will be times in our lives when we will go through terrible times; times when we can't see God at all in our life. We'll wonder if God is there; if God even remembers who we are. That is the time that our relationship in the Christian community is so important because this is when the community holds us up, encourages us, loves us and prays for us when we haven't the words to say.

As we look at the devastation in Moore Oklahoma, I don't see God as the cause of the destruction, but as the hope for the future. God is there working through the rescue workers cleaning up and rebuilding, those comforting the grieving, and guiding those who try to plan to avoid another disaster in the future. When we take care of the people and world that God loves so much, and allow them to take care of us, then we get a glimpse of the relationship that exists within our Triune God. We gain a little more understanding of the mystery of the Trinity. We glimpse the love within God and the love God has for us.