

Genesis 1: 1-2: 4a

Psalm 8

Trinity Sunday 2023

II Corinthians 13: 11-13

St. Matthew 28: 16-20

“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.”
St. Matthew 28: 19

As many of us here are aware, a handful parishioners have been taking a course offered by the Anglican Church called “Sanctuary.” This course helps equip us to know well how to minister among people who are dealing with mental illness. (I’ve been taking the course, along with the lay people...) Most of the examples of mental illness we have been looking at so far have been more common ones, which some of us here have been dealing with, either in ourselves or in our families – anxiety, fear, depression, and so forth...

The last episode, though, was addressing people who experience what we call “psychotic episodes.” During these episodes, sufferer’s experiences of reality become skewed: Sufferers may hear voices; or hallucinate – thinking they are seeing something in the room which really isn’t there... It’s very upsetting for the person experiencing these episodes – the world can become a scary place. Observing this can be upsetting for people nearby, too, because we aren’t sure how to respond, or might even be concerned about our own safety...

The interview was with the wife of a clergyman, who serves near Vancouver, B.C. Because of a physical medical condition, her brain chemistry went out of sync, and she began to hallucinate. Eventually, this young mother was healed through surgery to her thyroid. What struck me most about this interview, was when she said something like this:

When I was been treated in the hospital, and I was experiencing all these hallucinations, it was horrible. I knew something was wrong, but it was such an effort! I was trying so hard to make sense of my world. Even simple questions like, ‘What day of the week is it today?’ became enormously complicated for me. I was trying *so hard* to make sense of it all! It was such an effort...

It was such a help for this young woman that her husband could be her advocate and caregiver. She didn’t need arguments about what day of the week it was. Above all, she just needed someone safe to say, “I’m by your side. We’ll get through this...”

Once again: Life was such an effort, to try to figure it out...

Now, today is called “Trinity Sunday...” Most Sundays of the Church year, we’re either learning more about the ministry of Jesus Christ, or people’s response to Christ. But this Sunday is different: We’re asking one another to slow down... and to stop... and to take some time to appreciate who God is – our amazing, sovereign, creative, merciful God...

The core teaching (what we call “dogma”) of the Trinity is that there is a single, divine, eternal Spirit before all the glorious work of this universe’s creation, who has 3 core aspects to his being – not divided up like pieces of a pie, but intimately melted together. It’s a little bit like the way each one of us is a single living being, with many complex aspects which make up our human spirits...

This teaching of the Trinity wasn’t made up in a university lecture hall. Christians’ understanding of God flows out from looking carefully at the person and work of Jesus of Nazareth. The teaching of the Trinity flows out, from intimate knowledge of Jesus Christ...

First, Christians observed that Jesus of Nazareth is fully human: Jesus had a family of origin; he ate, he drank; he told a pun on at least one occasion; he wept; was tired, and so forth. The only exception is that he did not sin, although he was tempted. This doesn’t make Jesus *less* human, but points to what we all someday will be, in him...

And yet, Jesus of Nazareth taught and acted in ways which no other human being has, before or since! He spoke with the authority of God himself; he had power over nature; Christ forgave as only God can forgive; and even conquered death itself... Recognizing these facts, the early Christians *recognized* Jesus of Nazareth, the Messiah, to be both fully human, and fully divine, at the same time...

Christians have observed that Jesus often called himself both “the Son of God;” and at other times, “the Son of Man...” They observed further that Jesus prayed with an intimacy which shocked the good religious people of his day: Jesus prayed frequently, addressing his prayers as “Abba.” “Abba” is an Aramaic word sometimes translated “dear Father” or even “Papa” – but without the childish connotations. The Creator of the universe was a something like a dear heavenly Father – not as our human fathers (who always fall short); but the very best of human fathers points us to our amazing creative God...

Lastly, the Lord Jesus told his friends about the coming of the Holy Spirit, also called “the Counsellor;” “the Advocate” who comes alongside; or as the ancient prophets sometimes said, “The promise of the Father...”

There is only one true God. There can only be one Ultimate in the created universe. The traditional Christian language is to speak of the God we worship as 3 “persons” – Father, Son (incarnate as Jesus Christ), and Holy Spirit...

God has given us hearts to love him back. God has given us hands and feet, so we can serve him and one another. God has given us voices to encourage, and to praise God. And God has given us *minds*, to bring him glory. In the words of the ancient summary of the Law, quoted by Christ himself:

Hear, O Israel. The Lord our God, the Lord is One. You shall love the Lord your God, with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your *mind*, and with all your strength. And you shall love your neighbour as yourself. (Mark 12: 29-31)

I believe that science and faith, ultimately, do not contradict one another, but are different ways of encountering God and God's work... I believe it's appropriate, that we use our minds as well as our hearts, to encounter God...

However, let's admit that we have limits!... When some people try to consider that God is a Holy Trinity, they become like the person is a psychotic episode – anxious; and striving so hard to make sense of reality... Ultimately, our capacities always fall short. This side of heaven, we will never understand fully the mystery of how God is present as we share Communion together... Likewise, we will never understand with full the depth the wonder and presence of the Living God. Let's use our *minds*, yes – but not to the point of anxiety and restless striving. Jesus Christ has revealed the core of all that we need to know. Let's learn to rest in that...

We have lives to be lived... Yet, behind and above and through it all, we are being called to our true Home, where joy will never end; when, by the overwhelming grace of God, we are his forever. We shall behold him, as it were, face to face.

Thanks be to God.