

BIBLE READINGS: Romans 8: 12-17 John 3:1-17

SERMON

Glory be to the Father and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost. As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be. World without end, Amen.

TRINITY, simply put, is a name for God. Names are meant to help us appreciate who someone is. "Trinity" is a name that speaks to our understanding and our intellect, and remember, the intellect is an okay thing for us to use.

This name, this teaching developed in the 4th century, declaring God to be One but also Threefold: Three Persons who are each God, and who are different yet equal. One God-in-Community, you might say. There are further details of understanding, about the second Person, for example, the Son of God, with two natures, human and divine; and about the third Person, the Spirit, who "proceeds" from the love of Father for Son, and Son for Father: who is poured out from them. All of this speaks to our understanding, and challenges our understanding.

The teaching, or "doctrine," was not just made up. It was developed and put into words as an attempt to understand something much more vast. Something beyond our ability ultimately to comprehend intellectually.

What we know of God - the continuing awareness of God among believing people; we discovered through the stories of our ancestors, their experiences of God; and through our prayers and spiritual experiences too. Through the stories our ministers and parents have passed along, we have discovered God. We come to KNOW God, never fully understood, but certainly it is real knowledge of God, real experience, real encounters and loving recognition.

In today's reading from John's Gospel, we hear about how Jesus knew God. He knew God as the one in whom he has found his origins and his mission, whom he knew as Abba, an experience of knowing, that he wants to transmit. It is all about being saved from death and fear. Remember, he's speaking to the old man Nicodemus, who is worn down by these fears common to us all.

SO NOW, where is your experience of God, what is it like: what have you come to know, even though you can't explain it? Pay attention to your own heart, imagination, and stories.

I think of my own stories – of returning to God after times of great disappointment, hurt or loss, with church, family, myself, when all I want is to step outside of it all wishing I could do it and still get paid for my job!

We all have those sort of experiences. We have those times, those places of embarrassment and wishing it were different, for our country, family, church. We cast blame, even on ourselves, and look down on the little we've achieved.

And yet even with that heavy load we are still invited back. Such moments are not dead ends, but open doorways, invitations to come back to where you have found God before, who waits there in the painful stress.

"Abiding in faithfulness. Slow to anger, rich in mercy." Isn't that it, what we come to realize, the older we get, God is more faithful and more tender than we can ever be toward ourselves. And so we live our own story of Faith.

So what have you come to know, even though you can't explain it? Who is this God more powerful and full of promise than any church or community or law of life we might choose?

Who is this one who carries us to new birth? A Mother (who else gives birth?) Who disturbs our stability and rigid ways? Who calls us to the acceptance of one another in peace, even affection.

It is in these places that God waits, surprises, opens up, moves toward us. Who is this, as the Pharisees asked about Jesus, who is this who even forgives sins?

We've had these moments of finding ourselves in new places after reconciling with brother or sister or friend.

Certainly a powerful story of God at work, isn't it?

I know I stand here with people who have placed their trust in Jesus and who recognize that Christ is powerful beyond our ability to control things.

I pray here with people who have found it possible to give life by giving of themselves, Spirit People, who learn little by little to hear the voice of good guidance calling us out to our mission.

God is so many-sided, all these stories, meeting Christ beside you as a volunteer at Morning Tea or in English Classes, maybe meeting the creator of all things one morning as the sun shines through the clouds as you go to work or meeting the heart of Jesus in the hug you did not expect from the friend you did not expect to meet.

Many moments, many prayers, many healings, but all One and the same God. So have the scholars come to explain this experience of our creator, of Jesus our brother, of the Spirit given through them both. But the explanation can seem to reduce things too much. As someone once said: God is more than two men and a bird. The explanations can leave out too much.

So we celebrate today what we have come to know even though we can't explain it all. We mend our ways and live in peace so as to let the hope of God's power be known by all.

Who is this God: God is Abba as well as Father, Mother as well as Creator; Word from the beginning as well as Son and Brother; Christ the Lord, as well as Jesus; Servant of our deepest needs, as well as King beyond any king; wisdom as well as Spirit; IN HERE as well as OVER ALL.

As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen