

**BIBLE READING:** Matthew 28:16-20

**SERMON**

Most people like a mystery, but only as long as the mystery is eventually solved. That's what detective stories play into. We know that at the end we'll find out whodunit, and that the clues will have been there if we had eyes to see them. Real life isn't like that though, and that can make us feel profoundly disturbed. We like to feel we have life under control.

I want to share a story of a minister who showed great pastoral sensitivity - Rev Anne le Bas . This is her story .... *I was once asked by a woman I knew to talk to her daughter, who was about 6. There had been a complicated bereavement in the family, and the child seemed to be really struggling with it. As this child told me about it she told me about the moment when she'd watched her mum answer the phone and receive the news of the death. "What happened then?" I asked. Mum had started to cry, she said, so she had fetched her a glass of water. "That was kind – why did you do that?" "Because I thought it would make Mummy better". "And did it?" I asked. "No" she said, sadly.*

*And that was what was troubling her. She had wanted to make it better, and she couldn't. I took her small hands and laid them on top of mine. "Whose hands are bigger?", I asked. "Yours are". "Why's that?" "Because you are a grown up." I explained that some things were too big for little hands to hold, and sometime it needed a grown up to sort things out. It was a difficult thing to make her mummy feel better, and it wasn't surprising that she couldn't do it. But what about the things, I wondered which even grown ups couldn't sort out. I asked how big God's hands might be. She spread out her arms as wide as she could – "As big as this!" she said. So maybe, we decided there were things we would just have to put into God's hands to sort out, the hands of the one who has "measured the waters in the hollow of his hand, and marked off the heavens with a span."*

*That conversation seemed to do the trick. It helped her to come to terms with the fact not only that she couldn't sort out the woes of the world, but that she didn't have to, and I've never forgotten it, because I know I need to remember that myself from time to time.*

Today is Trinity Sunday, a day for contemplating mysteries too big to get our heads around. Theologians have tried to explain how God could be three and one at the same time, but to be frank their explanations have never and will never really get it sorted out satisfactorily. That's because in a way we start from the wrong end with this conundrum. We start with the doctrine and then try to explain it. The early Christians though, started with experience. They had always believed in a Creator God – a loving parent. Then they met Jesus, and in him they felt they were meeting God himself. Then, when Jesus was no longer with them, they encountered this mysterious experience called the Holy Spirit, which made them feel as if Jesus himself, God himself, were close to them "Lo, I am with you to the end of the age," said Jesus, and that's how it felt. These experiences were different, and yet the same. But there was only one God – that was fundamental to their understanding – so how could this be? What had happened to God when Jesus lay dead in the tomb? Was God dead too? Was a third of him dead? Press any human explanation too far and it breaks down. Our experiences are true and real, but try to put them into words and we come unstuck.

The Christian belief in the Trinity then, whatever else it is, is a reminder that God is bigger than we are. It gives us permission to be baffled, to accept that we always will be. It gives us permission not to feel we have to solve all the problems of the world, but to leave them in the only hands that are big enough to hold them. Amen

Acknowledgement: Rev Anne Le Bas