

Experiencing the Fullness of Faith

Feast of Trinity (C)

Published in the Ministry District of Yorke Peninsula

Sunday, June 12, 2022

Trinity Sunday is probably one of the most daunting days to preach, for the challenge to the preacher is always to try and explain the trinity to the listener, and yet this is the original mission impossible. Many of the early problems in the church relate to trying to explain the mystery of God in human terms. The heresies of the second and third centuries often arose when some image which was used to explain an aspect of the Trinity was projected to be the full explanation. The thought that the Trinity is like water, ice and steam which explains the same substance and yet distinctiveness, fails to allow the existence of all three together. In an attempt to explain the oneness of God, the Threeness of God is reduced to different 'modes' or expressions of the one. For those who are interested, this error has a name – "Modal Monarchianism" and although rising in the second century still continues today in groups like the Jehovah's Witness and the Christadelphians.

So, the danger is always in the attempt to find a simple explanation, the result is one that creates as much misunderstanding as it does clarification. But perhaps this is the problem. When we introduce the concept of the trinity, three persons - one God, we are introducing something that defies our human reasoning – How can something be three at the same time as being one? Any attempt to rationalise this is destined to failure. We are attempting to bring the infinity of God into the finity of finite mind. It is like trying to explain eternity in terms of time. It is not endless time, but rather the absence of time.

Thus, this feast of the Trinity is not here to explain the nature of God, but to challenge the believer about the mystery of faith. Faith is not about understanding all that there is about God but accepting that there are things that we do not understand. (And perhaps things that we will never understand). **I believe in the Trinity** is a different statement to **I understand the Trinity**. In the infinite wisdom of God, we are only required to make the first and not the second.

But in saying all this, there is a danger that we will still attempt to reduce God into a manageable experience. One of the significant causes of the diversity of the church with multiple denominations has been the emphasis within particular parts on one aspect of the Trinity. There are churches that stress the majesty of the Father, those that emphasise the salvation of the Son and those that emphasise the power of the Spirit. Although not drifting into heresy, there is the danger that we do not experience the fullness of God the trinity. Churches of the Pentecostal Tradition have a good grasp of the need for the power of the Spirit in the life of the believer, but this emphasis has lessened the impact of the need of a personal Salvation (through confession and response to our Lord) nor the Majesty of God.

There will always be a preferred connection with God for any believer, but the feast of

the Trinity is a reminder that as Tim Shaw would say – Wait – there is still more. If we are only content to relate to God in the one dimension, then our faith is incomplete. The Trinity poses us three questions, that unless we are able to affirm all three, our faith is incomplete and that we should not be satisfied until we have all that this Triune God has to offer. Sadly, some people are so convinced that have it all, that they not only miss out on all that God has to offer, but they also seek to prevent others from experiencing it as well. So, what are the Questions? I will personalise them as this is what they demand – not a corporate response but an individual one.

First: Have I experienced the Majesty of the presence of God the Father, so much so, that I am overwhelmed by his presence and my smallness and insignificance?

Second: Have I encountered the Risen Lord and in the presence of his sinlessness, reached out in repentance and personally respond to his offer of salvation?

Third: Have I encountered the power of God in my life, where the Spirit takes over my whole being and I surrender to this?

The challenge of the Trinity is that the believer seeks the fullness of faith. For each of us the initial understanding of God will come through an encounter with one member of the Trinity, but unless we are open to experience all that there is of God, we are selling our faith life short.

The Trinity asks us to open ourselves up to a fullness of faith. And even when we can say we have all this, our God of surprises will offer us more.

Jesus said to his disciples: *"I have much more to tell you, but you cannot bear it now. But when the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you to all truth. He will glorify me, because he will take from what is mine and declare it to you. Everything that the Father has is mine; for this reason I told you that he will take from what is mine and declare it to you."*

AMEN