

THE HOPE JOURNAL

LEARNING TO LOVE, TOGETHER

JUNE 4, 2023



TRINITY

dealing with three things at once

by Drew Downs

The Trinity. How does that work?

It is a pretty honest question. We do, after all, participate in a religion that argues that God is one and three at the same time.

And yet, the answer (it's a mystery!) is really not all that convincing.

Most of our attempts are confined to the limits of our own imaginations. About the

world, time, and space. Limits which, like our own attempts at multitasking, place us in a finite world we imagine can be transcended by scrolling Instagram while watching TV.

We aren't all that equipped to take in that volume of stimulus. So we're not that good at dealing with three things at once. But once again, we try anyway. Because the Trinity isn't a code we're supposed to crack. But a vision of relationship that transcends everything.

PENTECOST

2023

WHAT'S GOING ON

*"You know we've got to find a way
To bring some loving here today".*

-Marvin Gaye

Disciples, Apostles, and Saints!

Trinity

This week is the first Sunday after Pentecost. It is also known as Trinity Sunday, one of the seven principal feasts of the church year.

What is Trinity Sunday?

We use this day to remember the Trinity: our way of describing the character of God in three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

How we have *one* God and also *three* "persons" is itself a hazy truth. The kind which is like a lucid dream, half-remembered. Nailing it down makes the truth of it disappear.

It is also famously impossible to teach. Most attempts to describe it are mired in heresy. This is why we can't say it's like water/ice/steam or a three-leafed clover. We'd love to have such a neat visual to wrap it up in, but alas, we cannot.

What we have instead is conviction. We really are left with "it just is". Which is not entirely satisfying. But it is also kind of...OK. We can say God is our god. And also Jesus is one of the personas of God.

And that, in its hazy truth, is sort of satisfying. Because we have a God who is present, in different personas, connecting with us in different ways, and making it all real. And that's more than one god can do.

With love,
Drew

PENTECOST

2023

FOR SUNDAY

Trinity Sunday

June 4, 2023

Collect

Almighty and everlasting God, you have given to us your servants grace, by the confession of a true faith, to acknowledge the glory of the eternal Trinity, and in the power of your divine Majesty to worship the Unity: Keep us steadfast in this faith and worship, and bring us at last to see you in your one and eternal glory, O Father; who with the Son and the Holy Spirit live and reign, one God, for ever and ever.

Amen.

Reading

Matthew 28:16-20

The eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 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, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

PENTECOST

Reflection

This week's passage is referred to by many as The Great Commission. These final verses in the gospel of Matthew depict a risen Jesus telling his disciples to go out into the world and make new disciples. An edict we associate with evangelism.

It also has a parallel association with a darker mission. It informs ideas of supersession: of transforming all people and nations and placing them under the authority of the church.

And to be honest, neither of those things is what most of us think of when we think of the Trinity.

The doctrine of the Trinity has developed over the last two thousand years as a beautiful, mysterious, challenging vision of God. It was born out of deep conflict and encouraged deep conflict. This is why I continue to wrestle with it.

And yet, the idea that we can even *participate* in divining the nature of God is still so remarkable.

This is, after all, what is remarkable about the Great Commission, too. That Jesus was speaking to people who followed him all this way. And he is sending them out with all of the responsibility. All of this opportunity. Even when some doubted. After this all, some doubted. And that doesn't stop the program.

We're so obsessed with our programs, paradigms, and projects: that they be perfect. Right. Just so. And here's Jesus. Sending his followers out. Giving them the keys to the whole store knowing some of them *doubt*. Most are probably unsure. And yet here we are. Making the most of it. Trying to share that kind of love with other people. The kind that is willing to let go, even when things are so very far from perfect.

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