

St. Davids-Queenston United Church
Trinity Sunday
June 7, 2020

Invitation to Worship

God our Creator,

We call you Father, Mother, Author of life:

Christ our saviour,

We call you the Son, the Messiah, the One who saves:

Holy Spirit, we call you the Advocate, the Inspirer, Breath and Wind of God:

Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty,

Heaven and earth are full of your glory:

Draw us closer to you O God.

Draw us in Spirit, Christ, Creator,

That we might journey with you more fully and deeply in this life and beyond. Let us worship God.

Gathering Prayer

Abba, Creator, Holy One, we call you by many names, but the names we choose show our relationship with you. We desire to grow closer to you. We desire to hear your voice above the chatter of this world, to know your ways and to walk in them.

Spirit of life, wind and breath among us, we feel you move through us, guiding us on our journey, inspiring us to share your love with others. Jesus, the Christ, the Saviour, our brother and friend, we desire to walk your ways and to love one another as you have loved us.

Triune God, we wish to be drawn into the depths of your love, first glimpsed at creation, when your voice called us into being, out of darkness into the light. Continue to call us and guide us and lead us. Amen

Message: Trinity?- Who Cares?

A group of University students were discussing the nature of God. Some didn't believe there was a God, but most had a belief in some kind of God. The discussion was lively. "God is a big Teddy Bear who gives me a hug when I need it. No Teddy bear God for me! God is the chief justice of some kind of universal supreme court who is going to nail me to the wall when I show up for judgment." The discussion took some time. Then one person said "God is whatever we think God is. One person's idea is as good as another's. We shouldn't judge other people's religious ideas".

This opinion seemed to gain wide approval, it was fair and democratic, until a facilitator asked "what about some serial killer who said God told him to kill people. Is his idea of God ok?"

Hmm- there was some quick modification to the God of the democratic way. Revised, it came out, "people can have any idea of God as long as they don't hurt other people."

That really sounded like the most reasonable thing to many of the students. Nobody gets hurt and everybody gets their own God.

Today is Trinity Sunday. For about 700 years now, the western church has set this Sunday aside for reflection on the tremendous mystery of the Trinity. When we sing that wonderful old hymn Holy, Holy, Holy; we sing, God in three persons Blessed Trinity.

Many clergy would just as soon skip preaching about the Trinity and most Christian folk I know have little or no desire to grapple with the concept when the world is already confusing enough! In fact Trinity Sunday has, nine times out of 10, usually been the time when conference held its annual meeting. Therefore, I have preached very few Trinity Sunday sermons.

Trinity is probably the most complicated aspect of Christian faith and the most difficult to comprehend, let alone make for a riveting sermon. I had a parishioner who said, "I am a good Christian, I believe in the Trinity, but I don't have a clue what it means."

And quite frankly, who cares? Does it matter?

What difference does it make to those of us struggling to make sense of the troubling world in which we find ourselves?

Well, maybe we need to look at the details of Trinity a little more closely. Everything from baking a cake to launching a rocket into space is dependant on details. Even a simple comma can make a difference. A woman was visiting Paris some years ago. She came across a most wonderful painting which could be hers for the bargain price of \$150,000. She immediately sent a telegram to her husband in New

York. She explained how she absolutely loved the painting and wondered if she could have it for her birthday. He replied by asking this message be sent by telegraph in reply. “No, price too high. The clerk however, made an error in sending the telegram. This, as you guessed is what was sent to the woman. No price too high.

Well, something like that was going on more than 1600 years ago when Emperor Constantine called 317 bishops from all over the Christian world to Nicaea, in order to settle the divinity question of Jesus Christ. Was Christ simply another prophet or was he the divine son of God, coequal and coeternal with God? The long and the short of conference at Nicaea is the debate centred around the living out of one simple letter. Whether or not you know Greek, you will know this letter, iota. It doesn't matter one iota, that's the origin. If everyone agreed to include the letter, iota, all could return home in peace and thus there would be unity in the church. Who would squabble over one letter?

But of course there is always one, this time a bishop named Athanasius, a stickler for detail and he just wouldn't let it go. The debate was over words that sounded the same, but had different meanings. The issue was whether Jesus was the unique, fully divine incarnate son of God, or simply another good person, even the best person, but not God become flesh.

Well, long story short; Athanasius prevailed.

The Nicene creed states; God from God, light from light, true God from true God, begotten not made, of one being with the Father. Scholars suggest that Athanasius persistence saved the Christian faith.

Are you bored yet? I told you Trinity was heavy stuff. So, what does all this have to do with you and me? Does it really matter?

Actually, it does.

It matters because it helps us answer the question, “Who is this God we continue to worship?”

Because God and Jesus are the same, we can relate to God. To know Jesus is to know God.

The shortest, simplest, definition of God in the Bible is,” God is love”. We have a loving relationship with God.

We believe that all people are created in the image of God and that personhood is rooted in the image of God. Our worth as human beings cannot be increased or decreased by any human power or circumstance. Our value is rooted in God alone.

Jesus was God, when he recognized and honoured the value of all human beings particularly those, who for one reason or another, had been cast out of the community and deemed to be less than other beings; the Samaritans, the poor, the mentally challenged, those deemed to be sinners.

I'm just going to stop for a moment and let that sink in and germinate in light of what has happened in recent days.

We are certainly given pause, when we look at our world and realize how far humanity has strayed from this basic Christian belief that we are all created by God and that we are **all** loved by God.

Although there are wonderful high points in our lives and human history, the painful truth is that countless millions of persons, made in the image of God, have suffered at the hands of other persons who are made in the image of God.

What do we do about that? There is the big question.

Well, first of all you don't stand in front of a church with a Bible in your hand and pretend that somehow you are doing the work of God. It's not an opportunity to call out the troops and add more violence upon people who have lived through generations of violence.

This is a time for sober thought. A time to listen with open minds and hearts. You may remember that phrase that was going around some time ago, "WWJD-What would Jesus do?" Perhaps it is a time to ask that question again of the **one** who is the Creator, the Saviour and the Spirit; the Triune God.

As you are in the midst of that pause, let me share with you words that have never been matched since 1963. They are, of course, the words of

Martin Luther King Jr. I know you've heard them before and I know that they stem from American racialism. I know that we have our own racial tensions in Canada. I know too, that if you listen to these words and let them take seed within you, they can apply to any situation of racial intolerance.

In 1963, MLK spoke in Washington. Here are some excerpts from that speech, some of it redacted and some quoted.

King reminded people that 100 years before, Lincoln had signed the Emancipation Proclamation, but that 100 years later there was not equality, that the chains of discrimination and poverty in the midst of a vast ocean of prosperity still existed and that his people still found themselves in exile in their own land. He said they had gathered that day to dramatize a shameful condition. He said it was obvious that America had defaulted on its promises. He said we have come to remind America of the fierce urgency of now. Now is the time to make the real promise of democracy and the path of racial justice. Now is the time to make justice a reality for all Gods children. It would be fatal for the nation to overlook the urgency of the moment. The whirlwinds of revolt will continue to shake the foundations of our nation until the bright days of justice emerge. We can never be satisfied as long as people of colour are the victims of the unspeakable horrors of police brutality.

"I say to you today, even though we face the difficulties of today and tomorrow, I still have a dream. I have a dream that one day this nation

will rise up, live out the meaning of its creed that all people are created equal.

I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the colour of their skin but by the content of their character.

I have a dream that one day little black boys and girls will be able to join hands with little white girls and boys as sisters and brothers.

I have a dream today, I have a dream that one day every valley shall be exulted, every hill and mountain shall be made low and the crooked places will be made straight. And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed and all flesh shall see it together. This is our hope. This is our faith. With this faith we will be able to transform the jangling discord of our nation into a beautiful symphony of brotherhood. With this faith we will be able to work together, to struggle together, to stand up for freedom together.

So, let freedom ring. Let freedom ring.

When we allow freedom to ring, when we let it ring from every city and every hamlet, from every state and city, we will be able to speed up that day when all God's children, black and white, Jew and Gentile, Catholic and Protestant will be able to join hands and sing that old spiritual, free at last, Free at last, Great God Almighty, we are free at last.

That was 1963, 57 years ago. Why are we still there? I leave that question with you.

Today, we have gathered though apart, a gathering of persons who have been created in the image of God and redeemed by God, the Saviour and joined by the Spirit which transports us into the very presence of God and the saints of the ages, MLK included, “casting down their golden crowns around the glassy sea.”

In these moments of worship, we may hopefully more fully grasp the knowledge that we are all God’s children.

And with that knowledge may we respond to that reading for today, to go into the world to teach everyone to obey God’s commands.

“And what is the greatest commandment? That you shall love God with all your heart, soul and mind and that you shall love your neighbour as you love yourself.

In the name of the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit and the people said.....

Prayers of the People

Loving God, we are limited in our understanding of you, but we know that you care for us and for all creation.

Thank-you for loving us and remaining with us in all our sorrows and joys and struggles.

Thank you for the life of Jesus, whose life shows us the way to reconciliation and trust.

Thank you for your Spirit who leads us.

Warm our hearts and unite us, that we might open our lives to your direction and to accept your love and respond to it in our relationships with all your sons and daughters.

Be with all who struggle with racial discrimination and open our eyes, our ears and our hearts to them.

We pray once again for those affected by this pandemic. Be with those who are ill, those who have lost loved ones, those struggling to heal and keep us safe.

We lift up before you those known to us and those beyond our knowledge who are in need of prayer this day. (Prayers will be said in the service for those who have submitted prayer requests).

This we pray in the name of the one who taught us to pray together, our Father....

Benediction

May you know the presence of God who dwells within your days;
the mystery of Christ who drenches you in love;
the blessing of the Spirit who bears you into life anew.

Go from this time of worship with the blessing of the Creator, the Redeemer and the Sustainer. Amen