

St. Mark's Episcopal Church  
June 16, 2019  
The Reverend Rick Veit

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Today we celebrate Trinity Sunday. What theologians have discovered by studying the New Testament is that there are really three parts to the one and holy God. There is God the Father, or the Creator. There is God the Son, or Jesus Christ, also known as the Redeemer. And there is God the Holy Spirit, our Advocate and Counselor, the Sustainer, the one who draws us towards Jesus, the one who helps us to do what is right in the world, the one who heals.

Why do we believe this controversial idea? Did you know that, at one time, it was highly controversial? Judaism teaches that there is one God, not multiple gods. When Christianity started to develop, people believed in three parts to one God. It was and still is one God though. There are just three parts, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Jewish people did not like this. To them it wreaked of polytheism.

John wrote in the late first century A.D., “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made;...(and) The Word became flesh and dwelt among us.” John was speaking of Jesus and God being one. He was there at the beginning of all creation. And yet, at one point in history, God sent his Son into the world in human form. Jesus, therefore, is both God and man. But I digress. Also, according to John, Jesus is the Word of God – “And the Word became flesh.” And we know as Christians that the *Bible* is the Word of God.

Have I confused any of you yet? We, as Christians, follow the Word of God, which is both Jesus and the Bible. Now back to the Trinity.

As we learned in the Gospel today, before Jesus’ death, he was spending time with his closest disciples. He began to teach them about the Holy Spirit. He said, “I still have many things to say to you,...When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth; for he will not speak on his own, but will speak whatever he hears, and he will declare to you the things that are to come.”

So, the Holy Spirit, who came in a special way after Jesus died, guides us into all truth, all wisdom. And the Spirit is one part of the same God. He does not speak on his own. But, instead, he speaks whatever he hears from God. We also learned that the Spirit glorifies Jesus, the second part of the Trinity. He will take Jesus’ teachings and declare it to us. Then, Jesus declares that everything of the Father’s is his. In other words, the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit are all one, one in the same God, NOT multiple gods. And we know from the first book of the Bible, Genesis, that “the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters.” So, the Spirit was also there at the beginning, in addition to Jesus.

Now you know Trinitarian Theology. During graduate school, the churches who had interns from Virginia Theological Seminary, ie..me, always had the seminarians preach on this day (and it is probably no different these days). The Trinity is difficult to unpack in a 15-minute homily, even a 45-minute sermon.

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Relevance! God created everything, *everything*, the good and the bad. Satan? He was an angel, who wanted to be God, he wanted everything for himself. He became a fallen angel. Evil? In order to have love there must be freedom. Can you imagine a relationship where the person says, “You will be my friend -- In fact, you have no choice in the matter -- I will force you to be my friend and to love me?” That would not be love. God, being love, limited himself, because forced love is not love at all. We had to be free to choose a relationship with God or not. It is through Jesus that we can have a relationship with God. Jesus is love and the Holy Spirit draws all of us to love, as the author of Romans taught us today. When we stray from that love, the Holy Spirit draws us back to Jesus, who is our connection to God – The Trinity.

I guess the relevance is that God created us and loves us so much that he refuses to abandon us, even when, especially when, we freely choose to not be in relationship with him. He still loves us and wants the best for us. In many ways, perhaps God loves us more and reaches out with his Holy Spirit more if we have gone astray. Our God is love at his core. And he wants us to practice love, whether we are Roman Catholic, Muslim, none, atheist, evangelical, or Episcopal...as if Episcopal is not evangelical. It just means, “according to the teaching of the gospel or the Christian religion.” Its synonyms are scriptural, biblical, and orthodox...or Episcopal, Episcopal, Episcopal. But I digress.

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