

WINCHESTER, EASTLEIGH & ROMSEY CIRCUIT

Service at Home Sunday 4th June 2023

prepared by the Revd John Archer

Introduction

This is the day when we celebrate the Trinity. Some people find it a 'turn off', an enigma, a paradox of impossibilities. They are wrong. The Christian belief in the Trinity affirms some of the basic things about our faith.

Let us read pray or sing *Hymns & Psalms 29*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aJuqdIVH8VY>

Thou whose almighty word
chaos and darkness heard,
and took their flight,
hear us, we humbly pray,
and where the gospel day
sheds not its glorious ray,
let there be light!

Thou who didst come to bring
on thy redeeming wing
healing and sight,
health to the sick in mind,
sight to the inly blind,
O now to all mankind
let there be light!

Spirit of truth and love,
life-giving, holy Dove,
speed forth thy flight;
move on the waters' face,
bearing the lamp of grace,
and in earth's darkest place
let there be light!

Blessed and holy Three,
glorious Trinity,
Wisdom, Love, Might,
boundless as ocean's tide
rolling in fullest pride,
through the world far and wide
let there be light!

John Marriott (1780-1825)

Prayers

Almighty God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit when we consider the works of your hands we realise how insignificant we are, and yet you have given us the capacity to know you as our Saviour, that

in you we move and live and have our being. We know that as we worship you our lives are enriched. Accept O God our prayers of adoration to the glory of your name. Amen

Father we confess that we do not think often enough about your mighty acts of creation, the life, death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus, and the gift of your Holy Spirit. We take so much for granted until things go wrong. We forget that you are more ready to give than we are to ask, and that your offer of forgiveness is always available to those who are truly sorry. Help us to know true repentance and forgiveness, for the sake of Jesus Christ our Saviour. Amen

We pray the Lord's Prayer

Bible Readings

Matthew 28: 16 – 20

2 Corinthians 13: 11 – 13

Let us read, pray or sing StF 11

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ntdcY8q7a9E>

Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty!
Early in the morning our song shall rise to thee:
holy, holy, holy, merciful and mighty,
God in three Persons, blessed Trinity!

Holy, holy, holy! All the saints adore thee,
casting down their golden crowns around the
glassy sea;
cherubim and seraphim falling down before thee,
who wert, and art, and evermore shalt be.

Holy, holy, holy! Though the darkness hide thee,
though the sinful human eye thy glory may not
see,
only thou art holy; there is none beside thee,
perfect in power, in love, and purity.

Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty!
All thy works shall praise thy name in earth and
sky and sea;
holy, holy, holy, merciful and mighty,
God in three Persons, blessed Trinity!

Reginald Heber (1783-1826) (alt.)

Sermon

In the film 'Nuns on the Run', two crooks on the run from the police take shelter in a training convent where they dress up as nuns. Eric Idle and Robbie Coltrane have the following conversation:

RC: Here's the pitch. You've got the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost. The three are one, like my old priest used to say. Three leaves but one leaf. Now the Father sent down the Son who was love, and then when he went away, he sent the Holy Spirit who came down in the form of a

EI: (interrupts.) You've told me already, a ghost.

RC: No, a dove.

EI: The dove was a ghost?

RC: No, the Ghost was a dove.

EI: Let me try and summarise this. God is his Son and his Son is God, but his Son moonlights as a Holy Ghost, a Holy Spirit and a Dove, and they all sent each other, even though they are all one and the same thing.

RC: You've got it. You really could be a nun!

EI: Wait a minute. Does that make any sense to you?

RC: Oh no, but it makes no sense to anybody. That's why you have to believe it. That's why you have to have faith. If it made sense, it wouldn't have to be a religion would it

A character in Alan Bennett's play '40 Years On' (set in a boys public school) says, "I am still a bit hazy about the Trinity sir." His teacher replies "3 in 1, 1 in 3 – perfectly straightforward. Any doubts about that, see your maths master."

If only it were as simple as that!

Background

The early Christians had no doctrine of the Trinity but they experienced the Trinity in fact. It was not until a century or so later, when the church existed predominantly in lands having a Greek culture, that they were forced to form a doctrine and systematise their belief to protect the Church against heresy. Over the years, Christians have come to know something about the nature of God.

There is only one God

The heathen concept of many Gods is unacceptable to modern man. God is one but that can be as one distant and unknowable and

remote. Shut your eyes for a few moments and think about God. You might begin with an elderly man with a beard sitting on a cloud! You would probably think that image childish and want to move on. Perhaps you would think of Jesus – God as a person. It is difficult to think of a God with personal qualities if they are not expressed in a human being. Or maybe you would think of God as a mysterious presence in the world prompting and guiding.

The three words we affirm today, 'father', 'son' and 'spirit' all express relationship. You cannot be a father without children, or a son without parents. 'Spirit' is the thing that is vital to make a team, or music or a project work properly. In an age where we glorify the autonomy of the individual, where business aims at individuals and so many books are about self-fulfilment, it is important that we may know the value of life in relationship. Jesus talked of God as 'father' (Abba). God, as Jesus spoke about him, was loving, forgiving and compassionate.

God is a person – Jesus

In his letter to the church at Rome, Paul speaks of Jesus being the bridge between human beings and God. Jesus is an eternal sign of God's wise expansive love. Jesus has come in order to make belief in God easier, for in Jesus God's love is visible touchable and do able. So the second person of the Trinity becomes the means of seeing the first person most clearly.

God is Spirit

In his gospel John uses different language. For John the Spirit of Truth which is the Spirit of the risen Christ is available in people's hearts and through this means, God can speak directly to our inner being. The third person of the Trinity is God's Spirit moving in the world, in individuals and the community. The early believers who first thought of God in this way began with their experience of Jesus. It was in making sense of what they knew about the purpose of his life, death and ongoing influence, that they learnt to look beyond him to the nature of God and how God was still real to them once Jesus had gone.

A few years ago there was a craze for producing computer-generated 3 dimensional pictures. When you first look at the picture you can see nothing beyond it. But then you learn the trick. You lengthen the focus of your eyes and look

'through' the picture and a 3 dimensional image jumps out at you. The effect is dramatic. Someone who has been trying for a while suddenly shouts out, "Yes I see it". Then your eyes return to the surface of the picture and the image disappears. When we focus on Jesus, we see beyond him to the nature of God - beyond all time and space and yet present in the life of Jesus and ultimately present in the everyday lives we lead. That is the work of the Spirit.

This was the experience of the early Church. The presence of God's Spirit was a mark of Judaism. It was now newly experienced and understood as the Holy Spirit since the experience of Pentecost - truly God present with them in Spirit – the comforter that Jesus had promised. They were forced to the conclusion that, though impossible to logically explain, the Trinity was a fact beyond dispute in the early Church. There was never any talk of having two Gods.

Conclusion

We say the 'Grace' at the end of all our services.

The Grace of the Lord Jesus Christ

Our first experience of God is through the grace – Jesus' redeeming love. Through the 'grace' we are led to

The Love of God

We are sure of the father's love because of Jesus who suffered and died for us. This love of God is made accessible to us through

The Fellowship of the Holy Spirit

He is God present and active within us.

Go back to Robbie Coltrane's nun: "O no, it makes no sense to anybody. That is why you have to believe it. That's why you have to have faith". Perhaps that is as profound as any other statement of the Trinity!

Let us read pray or sing StF 424

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CGKhz1_C41s

God forgave my sin in Jesus' name;
I've been born again in Jesus' name,
and in Jesus' name I come to you
to share his love as he told me to.

*He said: 'Freely, freely you have received,
freely, freely give;
go in my name and because you believe,
others will know that I live.'*

All power is given in Jesus' name
in earth and heaven in Jesus' name;
and in Jesus' name I come to you
to share his power as he told me to.

Refrain

Carol Owens (b. 1931)

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Blessing our Gifts

Bless all the gifts we have given to you Lord.
Transform them into service done in your name.

Prayers for Others

Lord we pray for the 'have nots' of this world -
those who have no homes living rough
on the streets;
those who are refugees in camps;
those in bed and breakfast as they have
nowhere to go;
those who have no food, their crops having
failed, their economies burdened by debt;
those who have no access to education or a
health service or welfare system;
those living in fear under autocratic regimes.

Lord we have been fortunate. Stir our hearts to
respond to the needs of the 'have nots'. In the
name of Christ. Amen

Let us read pray or sing StF 297

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qqaw-VzM7ms>

Christ is alive! Let Christians sing.
The cross stands empty to the sky.
Let streets and homes with praises ring.
Love, drowned in death, shall never die.

Christ is alive! No longer bound
to distant years in Palestine,
but saving, healing, here and now,
and touching every place and time.

In every insult, rift and war,
where colour, scorn or wealth divide,
Christ suffers still, yet loves the more,
and lives, where even hope has died.

Women and men, in age and youth,
can feel the Spirit, hear the call,
and find the way, the life, the truth,
revealed in Jesus, freed for all.

Christ is alive and comes to bring
good news to this and every age,
till earth and sky and ocean ring
with joy, with justice, love, and praise.

Brian Wren (b. 1936)

Blessing

May the Grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Love
of God the Father and the Fellowship of the Holy
Spirit be with us now and for ever.

Amen

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Acknowledgements:

*Some prayers are amended prayers from "Prayers
for all seasons" by Nick Fawcett*

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