

Sermons at Christ Church

Arise, for the task is yours, take courage and do it.

Trinity Sunday

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Gracious God who revealed yourself to us in different ways, may you create in us the zeal to love and cherish our differences. May you fill us with the power to overcome divisions and see in each other a reflection of you. Amen.

Today is Trinity Sunday. It is one of those Sundays where the good news is about the mystery of a doctrine. As difficult as preaching about the Trinity may be, I really feel that with all that is going on in the streets of our dear country, preaching about the Trinity has never been as important as it is today.

A few years ago I read a book by a Catholic Jesuit, Richard Rohr, *The Divine Dance-The Trinity and Your Transformation*. In his book, Richard argues, among others that the traditional narrative that underpins the idea of the Trinity is mainly due to the fact that the Church moved away from a relationship centered understanding of Jesus' presence among us to a hierarchical God who had no relationship with us. This hierarchical God was far removed from our daily experience, and could be described as the absentee landlord whose only task was to punish and effect judgement on people. In his view, for us to experience the Trinity-as the Father, Son and Holy Spirit; God has to be the ultimate participant in our lives, the life force in all we do, the pulsating energy between each and every creature, the breath of our joys, the discomfort of our trials, and in the pain of human suffering.

He argues that there is the need for a paradigm shift that acknowledged God as being the central part of our dance. The dance isn't my dance or your dance, it is our dance. And if we can be humble enough to acknowledge that we are a part of a dance, that every single bit of our lives is part of God's dance with us, we can make possible the transformation that is needed in our individual and communal lives.

At this hour we mourn for a country torn apart by strife. Many of our citizens are marching on the streets because for far too long, God had been taken away from God's dance with God's people. Many of our citizens are hurting because for far too long God has been made invisible by those who need God to be invisible-just so they can perpetrate inimical agendas. Many of our neighbors have been crying for justice because for far too long God's justice has been the preserve of the few well connected. Many mothers and fathers have been wailing for their murdered children because for far too long there has been little to no accountability for those who needlessly kill people like George Floyd. Many of our citizens sleep hungry. Sleep on the streets. Die alone. Live in drug infested neighborhoods. Attend poorly resourced schools. Do

not have the resources to succeed in life. For far too long, those who hold the Bible don't read the Bible, and even if they read it, they do not understand, and only interpret what they read to fit their own agenda.

The good news is that we know what happens when God is part of the agenda-we know healing, transformation, reconciliation, compassion, justice and a whole lot happens when God is part of the dance. But for far too long, God we have systematically reduced God's role.

For us then, the task is about rediscovering a new relationship with God, one where God is central to our daily life and work, one where God is central to the dance itself. This rediscovered relationship with God is not one where God comes around in the cool of the day and wonders where we are or what we're up to, but one in which God's intimacy with us provides a ready answer to the psalmist.

"What is man that you should be mindful of him?" Asked the psalmist. To this question, the creation story helps us understand that God is mindful of you and me because God created us in His image. God looks at you and me the same way that He looks at George Floyd and the police officer because all of us bear His image in us. God cares for us because He made us for His glory. And God's care for us always provides an example of how we ought to care for one another.

In the First Letter of John, God demonstrates His love for us by sending Jesus to the world, so that through him God would be made visible to us, through him we can have a relationship with God and through Him God would a present part of our dance. Jesus' life among us was the ultimate offering of a self-giving love. This Jesus, now resurrected from the dead, stands with his disciples in Galilee and lays claim to both cosmic and earthly authority. He sends the disciples to announce God's salvation, and there's a beginning of a new creation. Go baptize in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, he charged the disciples. Go and make creation new again, go and make God visible within this new community. And because of this charge, the disciples built a new communities of people who didn't look like each other, didn't speak the same language, didn't have the same culture, people who didn't simply buy into the message of love but believed that they could have a relationship with God by having a relationship with each other.

This new creation which calls for a rediscovered relationship with the God. Through the gift of baptism each is affirmed by this community as an essential part of it. It is a community where Jesus becomes our brother, our liberator, our sustaining presence, and our redeemer. It is a community where we entrust ourselves to him, both in life and death. Within this community, we are not only assured of being found by Christ, but we find ourselves accepted into his life and history. For by his life, death and resurrection, we can conclude that he not only lives and dies for us, but we rise with him. We rise with each other because we are in community with each other.

The rediscovered relationship with God is one where we all cry Abba Father-because we all have one Father. When we address God as Abba, we sense Jesus' closeness to us and his closeness to God. To cry Abba Father is to cease to think of the concept of father simply in a familial or patriarchal context. To cry Abba Father is to avail ourselves to seeking the kind of unity that Paul prays for a community that identifies

itself with Christ “...agree with one another, live in peace... Greet one another with a holy kiss” My question then is, can we achieve this unity? Is it even possible?

It is possible only through a rediscovered relationship with God where you bless the God who causes His rain to fall on the sinner and the saint, the believer and the unbeliever alike. It is only possible in a rediscovered relationship with God in a beloved community where members are required to affirm life and embrace the human desire to live. So that should one of us cry I cannot breathe, we may all be moved to offer that metaphorical oxygen which can help that person to breathe the breath of life which God freely gave at creation, and which is the reason God cares for us.

A rediscovered relationship with God is a community that dances with God. It knows of God’s healing in times of illness-like the pandemic. It knows of God’s consolation in times of tragedy-like that of George Floyd and many others. It knows of God’s reconciliation in the midst of the brokenness which we are witnessing. This beloved community of Christ that is filled with God’s spirit and so it builds people up, and for the good of the community, invites everyone to bring their vital energies and gifts for the benefit of the community. Each relies on the relationship that is mainly fueled by the presence of God’s spirit.

The overarching message of this beloved community is the awareness that neither you or I can establish a community by our individual selves. Neither you or I can have a relationship with our individual selves. You can love yourself, like many people do. You can hate yourself, like many people do. But you cannot establish a community with yourself because you cannot have a relationship with yourself. You need another person with whom you can have a relationship. That is why Jesus assures us that where two or three are gathered, where there is a community, he is in the midst of them-for that is the place of relationship, that is the place of life.

Trinity reconnects all who have found in themselves a reflection of the God who created them in His image. For that reason, they are obligated to build communities where people like George Floyd and all who look like him can find a new reason to join in.

As I reflected on this sermon, I could still hear echoes of a refrain I heard at a demonstration a few days ago “No Justice, No Peace.” If only we can rediscover the dynamic relationship that makes possible a genuine and free expression of our different selves. If only we can rediscover the zeal of the early Christians who built new communities simply on the basis of love. If only we can rediscover the zest with which early Christians built new communities which included people from all backgrounds. If only we can rediscover our relationship with God and with each other, there will indeed be peace because there will be justice in these new beloved communities we build. Amen.