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May

Spirit in Partnership

God Poured Out

TRINITY SUNDAY, YEAR A

Trinity Sunday invites us to celebrate the mystery of God’s partnership in creation—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—calling us to join in God’s ongoing work of love and renewal.

REFERENCES

Genesis 1:1-2:4a

Psalm 8

2 Corinthians 13:11-13

Matthew 28:16-20

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Preaching Notes

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Focus Texts: [Genesis 1:1-2:4a](#), [Matthew 28:16-20](#)

How do we tell the story of the Trinity? Some might be bold enough to point out that Trinity as a description or understanding of God does not appear as such anywhere in the Bible. It’s true. No prophet said, “Let me tell you about God as Trinity.” Neither Paul nor any other Epistle writer ever said, “The best way to understand God is by naming the Godhead as Trinity.” It just isn’t there. So, maybe a thing like Trinity Sunday is a theological non-starter, if not a waste of everyone’s time.

Except what is in there is a richness about the experience of God that we often neglect when we begin to talk about who God is for us. The biblical witness is that God is so multidimensional, so

nuanced, so accessible and yet inaccessible at the same time, that words often fail to describe this reality we claim by faith.

So, Trinity is an approximation of how we understand and approach our God. At its simplest level, we take the words of Jesus in Matthew 28 as a guide to this understanding. “Baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit” (verse 19b). This is our entry into Trinity. We can argue whether Jesus actually said this or whether these words were put in his mouth by those who wanted to establish a theological doctrine or tradition. There may be some editorial work going on here, to be sure. But the words remain. The invitation or the commandment remains. And the implication seems clear. We are meant to understand how God works in partnership.

Go back to the beginning. Take some time, preacher, to read the poem that begins our Bible. Read it in preparation, surely, but read it in worship. It preaches better than many of our sermons anyway. Give it space to be heard. Hear the unfolding of all that is. Hear the blessing that is imparted upon creation. Hear the divine presence throughout. Hear the “we,” the “us,” in the very act of creation. Let it seep into our beings, since we, too, are a part of this creation. This is our beginning; this is our origin—not as science, not as a historical reflection of the beginnings of the universe, but as a theological tone poem that speaks to the glory of who we are and who we might be as a part of the wondrous whole. It is a gift, this poetry, a prayer and a blessing, a reminder of our interdependence on all creation, and a belonging to a Creator who loves us and breathes life into us each and every day.

The NRSV and CEB translations of “wind” in verse two are correct, but unfortunate. We know that the Hebrew word here (*ruach*) can be translated as wind, as breath, and as Spirit. We know that. However, on Trinity Sunday, we need to hear Spirit. We need to hear that partnership, that blessing, but also the effort involved in creation. The word translated as “swept across” in the NRSV is translated as hovering or as moving elsewhere. The Hebrew carries the sense of movement, but also of trembling and of exertion. Something is stirring, or the Spirit is stirring something. There is effort here, exertion. God, through the Spirit, is bringing something to life, and that is never an easy or effortless process. Ask any mother.

The partnership of Creator and Spirit is clear. Is there a true separation in these “persons”? Is there a difference between you and your breath? Well, yes. And no. There is oneness and duality at the same time. There is effort expended and direction given. And all that is flows from that partnership. But wait, we think, duality is not trinity. Where is the third actor in this drama? John gives us the answer to that quandary in the prologue to his gospel. “In the beginning was the word” (John 1:1 NRSV).

There is God creating; there is Spirit causing a trembling; and there is a word spoken: Let there be. And there is. God is the author, the vision-caster. Spirit is the environment prepared and preparing for something to be. The Word is the conduit for creation to happen. And creation happens. Again and again, it happens. And it still happens. God, Spirit, Word are still at work in the world.

The incarnated Word invites us to be partners in that creation. “Go into all the world,” we are told. Go into creation and create. Go and envision; go and incarnate the kingdom, which is a kin-dom of relationship, hospitality, and transformation. Go and grow disciples. Grow seems better than make. Make can lead to colonial thinking. Grow is a dynamic relationship over time. Go and grow disciples. Invite them in through the water of new creation in the name of the Trinity. And then teach them, you’re not done at baptism. You’ve only begun. Teach them everything I have taught you. Teach them how to live in community. Teach them how to cross the boundaries we have created that keep people apart. Teach them how to care for bodies as well as souls. Teach them how to heal from their brokenness and find their identity in community and in him. Teach them how to follow, how to pick themselves up when they fall, or to be picked up by a caring community. Teach them how to practice faith, see Spirit, acknowledge the Creator, and live in the Son. Teach them everything. Because you are partnering with God in creation itself.

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