

Sermons at Christ Church

Be One Body in Christ, Belonging to Each Other.

Pentecost

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What is man that you are mindful of him? The Psalmist wonders. Who are we that God is mindful of us? Who are we that God should care for us? You may not think of yourself as being worthy enough for God's love, but I'd like to assure you this morning that God cares for people like you and me. God loves you just the way you are. And we are here today, not to think about how complex the Trinity is but how cherished we are, the extent to which God demonstrated His love for you and me and the power that God has given us to re-imagine what God is to us, what God means for us and what God expects of us.

It is a mystery to which the writer of the psalm cannot wrap his head around-that you are worthy, worthy enough that God cares about me-to the point where God demonstrated his love for us by sending his son Jesus Christ to die for our sins. This is the mystery that undergirds all we know about the Trinity.

In the gospel story Jesus promises his friends that when the Spirit of truth comes, he will lead them into all truth. And that truth which the spirit leads us isn't anything complicated, those who are open to that truth also wonder about the words of the psalmist "what is man that you are mindful of him. The son of man that you care for him." If only we can marvel about who we are, who am I, that in spite of me, how damaged I may be, how cruel I may be, how evil I may be, how good I may be, how perfect I maybe, how privileged I may be, that in spite of me-who I claim to be, God cares about me. If we can marvel at that, we can marvel at the beauty of God's mystery in each other.

It is this mystery that makes love possible. Through this mystery we come to realize that the highest standard to which we can attain isn't anything complicated, it is simply the awareness of the truth about human existence and the fact that we can sustain this human existence by demonstrating our love through the giving of ourselves in love.

The point is love only comes alive through the act of giving. Partners give off themselves in love. Families give off themselves in love. Friends give of themselves in love. To love, is to give. And the ultimate story of God is that God gave himself to us, just so we may learn how to give ourselves to others.

Sometimes, we give off ourselves in ways that doesn't make any sense-but we do so because we understand what it means to give. And to understand the trinity, is to understand what it means to give and the cost in giving. But we are not deterred by the cost. Trinity is about costly giving. Giving that does not count the cost.

And so for you and me to experience the Trinity-as the Father, Son and Holy Spirit; God, who is the ultimate giver, must be the active participant in our lives, the breath of our joys and the comfort in our moments of tribulations and suffering. God has to be the thread of awareness which connects each of us, one to another, just so through that connecting thread we may not only learn to give but to re-imagine God in a totally different way- a new way that takes into account God's care for you.

If God so cares about us, then the re-imagined God invites each into a community with Christ. Within this community, each of us is affirmed as an essential part of it. It is into this community that we welcome everyone, whether baptized or not. It is a community where Jesus becomes our brother, our liberator, our sustaining presence, and redeemer, and that we entrust ourselves to him both in living and in dying. Within this community, we are found and formed by Christ. Through the life, death and resurrection of Christ, we can conclude that Christ not only lives and dies for us, but we rise with him, even in death. Those who discover for themselves the self-giving love of Jesus come to realize that Jesus is God's beloved son, he is the first born within the re-imagined community and we are joint heirs with him.

Being joint heirs with Christ, we have the absolute responsibility to embrace the human desire to live and thrive. This community knows of God's healing in times of illness, knows of God's consolation in times of tragedy, senses reconciliation when brokenness occurs and commits itself mending and healing those who are hurt within the community. This is a community that is filled with God's spirit and so it builds people up, lifts people up, and for the sake of the community, everyone brings their vital energies and gifts into the life of the community. This Church and its many ministries is an example of a re-imagined community.

Remember this, the overarching drive within this community is the awareness that neither you nor I can establish a community with our individual selves, neither you nor I can have a relationship with our individual selves. We cannot establish a community with our individual selves because you cannot have a relationship with yourself. You need another person to establish a community, you need another person in order to have a relationship. Listen to Jesus' wise words, where two or three are gathered; where there is a community, I am in the midst of them-for that is the place of relationship, that is the place of life, that is the place where giving matters, that is the place for giftedness, that is the place where God comes alive. God thrives only in relationships.

A re-imagined God makes possible a community that doesn't pretend to be all knowing or self-sufficient. My mum tells a story of a Ghanaian engineer who was sent to India to study the railway system. Each morning, he will be picked up at his hotel and sent to the training complex. But all attempts to teach this man proved futile. Any new thing this man was taught was met this response "as for this, I know it already."

One morning, this gentleman woke up and got ready to be picked up, but he was met with a different driver who told him not to bother about work today. The engineer appeared very surprised and asked why. The driver politely told him he will be returning home to Ghana today. The engineer was stunned. What? What do you mean I am returning home? The gentleman politely responded "Well, you know everything and so you have to return home so someone who doesn't know may come and learn." This re-imagined community devotes itself to constant learning and prayer in order to discern the will of God. The re-imagined community is dedicated to collaboration and compromise to fulfill the purposes of God. The community is dedicated to the unity of purpose.

It is not dedicated to the unity of mind. No, not at all. It is dedicated to the unity of purpose. It honors and affirms our different and varying strengths and gifts and unites us in our desire to serve God and neighbor.

A re-imagined community considers the idea of the Trinity as an honest attempt to reconnect all who found in themselves a reflection of the God who created them in His image. It was an attempt to interpret the history of Jesus Christ as the history of God, and to lift up the depth of unity within the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, as an example for the new community of believers. The self-giving love and flowing connection between Father, Son and Holy Spirit was to be the template for the re-imagined community.

The Trinity is not about numbers, nor is it about a God who is a being among many. It is about a re-imagined God active in a re-imagined community and people. A re-imagined community that is justified by faith. It is a community that believes that faith matters-and that faith isn't a blind subscription to any creed or dogma, but faith calls for a response to the needs of our common life and world. And faith makes this demand upon us because we care about each other, just as much as God cares for us.

A re-imagined God makes possible a re-imagined humanity dedicated to unity like the Trinity. The Trinity cannot be an abstract theory when we ourselves know that our reality is nothing but a communion. There is no other form for the Christian life except a common one in which Christ is experienced as a living relationship between people. There is no other form for the Christian life except one in which the mystery that holds us all together is love. There is no other form for the Christian life except one in which we all marvel at the gift of each other-that in spite of who you are, God loves you, God is mindful of you and has adorned you with glory and honor. And for me, there's nothing more beautiful and reassuring than knowing that God finds us worthy of His love.
Amen.