

Trinity Sunday
12-06-2022
St Cuthbert's Anglican Church – Tweed Heads

Proverbs 8:1-4,22-31 The importance of Wisdom, before and during creation

Psalms 8 The Lord has power over all the Earth and yet we see the importance God places on humans.

Romans 5: 1-5 We are justified by faith and hope will not disappoint us.

John 16:12-15 Jesus tells how the Holy Spirit will come to his followers and teach them all about himself and the Father.

Introduction

Today we celebrate Trinity Sunday. It is a day set aside in our Church Calendar to remember one of the doctrines central to Christianity that we worship One God, but we experience that One God in "Three Persons", the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Whilst the word Trinity is not a biblical term, it is clearly derived from the bible, as we see all three "Persons" referred to in today's two New Testament readings from Romans and John's Gospel.

Today I would like to look at some of the church's history in which the doctrine of the Trinity was developed, and then look through our bible readings and see what it might mean for us to worship the Trinitarian God we know from the scriptures.

Doctrine of the Trinity

Some historians say that the birth of the Christian Church came at Pentecost, which we remembered last week. The time of Pentecost was when the Holy Spirit was made available to all followers of Jesus. Those first followers of Jesus were Jews and they had ingrained in their life and culture that there was one God who they worshipped, and that they were God's chosen people. After all, they had seen throughout the history of their nation how God had intervened to often protect and preserve them.

In Jesus they experienced a new closeness to God, and after the resurrection, one of Jesus' closest friends Thomas, declared of Jesus,

"My Lord, and my God!".

Then after Jesus's Resurrection and Ascension they experienced the power of the Holy Spirit in their lives. Thousands of people coming for baptism in a single day. The sense of God's presence and power in their lives must have been undeniably amazing. Of course, they wanted to keep sharing this "Good News" of salvation that Jesus had given to them and that the Holy Spirit had enabled them to share. But if the characteristics of Jesus and the Holy Spirit were so bound up in their experiences of God how could there still be only one God. This is not something that those first followers of Jesus resolved easily.

As they continued to grow and spread the Good News of Jesus, they develop ways of looking how they had experienced God in their lives, with what they read in the scriptures, and they developed ways of explaining what they experienced. They even developed new words to explain the "substance" or "persons" of God and how One God could be known in three ways. Arius, an Alexandrian priest who lived in the 4th century, came to the conclusion that Jesus, as a creature, and emanating from God, could not be fully God. His beliefs came to be known as Arianism, and were denounced as heresy at the councils of Nicaea (AD 325) and Constantinople (AD 381).

Both the Apostles and Nicene Creeds were developed around this time, with very clear structures affirming a triune God. The Athanasian creed seemed to be developed to denounce Arianism and is a statement of affirmation strongly endorsing Trinitarian doctrine. An Excerpt from the Athanasian Creed states:-

"That we worship one God in Trinity, and Trinity in Unity; Neither confounding the Persons: nor dividing the Substance"

Developed and agreed by Anglican Bishops in 1562, The 39 Articles of religion, state in article 1 :-

I. *Of Faith in the Holy Trinity.* There is but one living and true God, everlasting, without body, parts, or passions; of infinite power, wisdom, and goodness; the Maker, and Preserver of all things both visible and invisible. And in unity of this Godhead there be three Persons, of one substance, power, and eternity; the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.

This is but a brief snapshot, but as you can see, Christians have come to affirm a faith in the way we know One God, as Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

God the Father – The Creator

The first person of the Trinity, God the Father, is seen in our bible readings today as the Creator.

In the reading from Proverbs, we hear of a God who creates. A God not of chaos but of order, a God who has set things in place that we might be enabled to live. A God who delights in the creation, and in particular us, as human beings, created in the likeness of God.

In Psalm 8 we see the same. God as the Creator, and here there is also the sense that it is so amazing that the God who creates everything in the universe, is mindful of us as mere human beings.

From these two readings it is clear that if God is the creator, then our primary role as created beings is to worship the Creator. The psalmist declares:-

“¹ O Lord our Governor: how glorious is your name in all the earth!”

God the Son – The Redeemer

The second person of the Trinity, God the Son, is seen in our bible readings today as the Redeemer. In Romans 5:1-2 we hear:-

¹ Therefore, since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, ² through whom we have obtained access to this grace in which we stand; and we boast in our hope of sharing the glory of God.

It is only by accepting in faith, what Jesus has done for us, that we as mere human beings are able to enter a relationship with God. The unity that Jesus is a part of in God, draws us into that same unity.

We are redeemed by Jesus so that we also can live in unity with God.

God the Holy Spirit – The Sanctifier

The third person of the Trinity, God the Holy Spirit, is seen in our bible readings today as the Sanctifier. In Romans 5:5 we hear:-

“⁵ and hope does not disappoint us, because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us.”

And in John 16:13 we hear:-

“¹³ When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth”

It is the Holy Spirit who comes and dwells within us to give us hope and guide us to live our lives in unity with the Triune God we worship. To be sanctified means to be made holy, and of course only God is truly holy, but by the power of the Holy Spirit at work in our lives we are drawn into God’s unity.

Conclusion

Today we have heard how Christians down the ages have affirmed the Trinity, and in the readings from Scripture we have seen:-

God the Father who lovingly created us to live in unity with God.

God the Son who has redeemed us so that we can live in unity with God.

And God the Holy Spirit, who helps us and draws us to live in unity with God.

As Christians we believe that God exists as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in perfect unity. We, as mere human beings, are being drawn into this unity so that we might be enabled to understand and to experience life in all its fullness.

May God Bless you as you affirm the Trinity, and continue to be drawn into God's unity. Amen.