

Trinity Sunday Children's Sermon 2009

Talk to the children about water and ask them if they will be swimming in a pool or lake this summer.

Show them three containers one with ice, another with liquid and another with steam or vapor. Which one will they swim in? Are the other two forms of water not water? Ask if any of them can explain.

Talk about water and temperature. The temperature does not change what water is only its form. Whether ice, liquid or steam, water is the same but has the ability to appear in these three forms in nature.

Who else can appear in different forms? God. We say that God is three persons yet One because that is who He is. He is Father and the Son – Jesus, and the Holy Spirit. They all love each other and they want to be loved by us. God wants us to be in a relationship of love just as He is. Let's pray.

The God We Need Revealed
Trinity Sunday B 2009

Perhaps the only way the church can ever hope to understand the triune nature of God is for the church to be more truly the church. The doctrine of the Trinity reveals that relationships stand at the heart of the universe. Atoms do not exist unless they are in relationship with other atoms. You and I do not exist unless in relationships with others. Even God exists in relationship.

“The Shack” a novel by William Paul Young is a powerful story about one man’s encounter with God, the Holy Trinity. The man’s name is Mack. Mack confronts his worst nightmare, the murder of his youngest child, Missy. An anxious search for her leads friends and authorities to an empty mountain cabin which Mack calls “the shack” where they find Missy’s blood stained dress. Three years later Mack confronts the depression he calls *The Great Sadness*. After receiving a mysterious invitation in his mailbox to meet a stranger simply named, “Papa”, at the shack, Mack decides to confront the fear and torture of his soul. He’s not sure whether this is a cruel hoax, a setup by the murderer or whether this “Papa”, a name his wife uses for God, could actually be the one who invites Mack to get together.

The novel is provocative. It paints a different picture of God than you’ve heard in church but one that falls within the boundaries of traditional Christian faith. The God that Mack meets on a weekend trip to the shack is triune, three persons in unity, but appears to him in a way that he most needs.

Mack is angry at God for the death of his little girl. God will challenge Mack’s preconceptions of Himself, of life and death and everything he previously learned about reality. God or “Papa” reveals Himself as a large African American woman named “Elousia,” which means “Creator God who is real life”, a thin Asian woman, named “Sarayu”, which means, “wind,” and a Hebrew man, named “Jesus” who is unattractive by Mack’s standards.

The story unfolds to reveal a God in three persons that are in a perfect relationship – a relationship that Mack discovers he longs for. These three persons have transformed that once blood stained shack into a home away from home for Mack. These three persons Elousia, Jesus and Sarayu love each other completely and share genuine laughter until tears run down their faces. They cook, they garden, they fish, they know each other’s minds, but their entire mission that weekend is to bring life, laughter and love back into Mack’s life. In short, Mack is rediscovering God, but in ways that challenge the God he thought he knew.

We may not recognize God from what is expected. Yet God tells us something about Himself when we seek out a relationship of mutual love with another. The lens of love that God uses to reveal who He is ... Father, Son and Spirit enables us to know His nature of love when we read about their relationship in Holy Scripture. It speaks of a relationship that holds everything in common.

Elousia says to Mack, “All love and relationship is possible for you *only* because it already exists within Me; within God myself” (pg. 101, *The Shack*).

When we try to understand God through the lens of love that He gives us, it all makes plain sense. Yet it certainly does not explain the wonder that is God. Elousia says to Mack, "To begin with, that you can't grasp the wonder of my nature is rather a good thing. Who wants to worship a God who can be fully comprehended, eh? Not much mystery in that" (ibid, pg. 101).

Mack eventually does affectionately call Elousia "Papa", and his new personal relationship with God has changed everything. Mack will never be the same from his encounter with God and he will return home a new man. His healing has begun.

Once we have developed a bond with the God who is in perfect relationship we too will never be the same.

Isaiah, in a vision of the Temple saw the God of his ancestors on His throne in all His glory. The angels exclaimed,

"Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts;
The whole earth is full of his glory."

Each Sunday we exclaim with Isaiah these and similar words in the "Sanctus." And in the Gloria Dei, we say or sing, "Glory to God in the highest." The majesty and simplicity, the wonder and power evoke a simple prayer, "Abba! Father!" With such a prayer we proclaim our adoption as children by the Spirit of God.

What lens might we use to see our God the Trinity of Persons? The simplest way to see God would be through the eyes of a child. A child can see and hear and speak to God with greater faith than many adults. By faith we believe the mystery of God's unity. "For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God." Have you ever noticed at time for communion, that a baby will reach for the bread on the paten or bowl? Why does this happen? The child is led by the Spirit to be a part of his or her parents' celebration of life in the body of Christ. What a joyful thing to see a baby reach out, take and eat! God has promised His children good things to eat and a child believes it is a good thing to join in with parents.

When we use the lens of love shared in a community of faith, when people so love each other, dare to reach out of their comfort zone and share their peace with one another... is not the Holy Trinity among us? The God who is a trinity of persons may choose to be present in the life of another Christian, or your neighbor or even a stranger. We might encounter God when one of us brings the comfort of a meal to a sick parishioner. When a visit is made to a member no longer able to come to church then God is in that relationship. Or when a phone call is made to someone not seen in awhile because you one cares and one lets go of his self-centered independence and joins hands with that someone, the Holy Trinity is present in the unity that happens when that phone call is made.

God is certainly more than our preconceptions of Him. When we consider three forms of water found in nature the analogy may help us grasp a little of the wonder of the Trinity. Through the lens of the basic water molecule, we can see the relationship and sharing that takes place between ice, water and steam. They exist

relative to their temperature, but they are the same substance. Together all three forms of water are greater than any one alone.

God so loved the world, that He sent Jesus the Son to show us the way to depend on God in a deep and abiding relationship. Like a fire that depends on the wind for its existence, our hearts are set aflame by the Spirit. God knew that our human form could not know how alive it could be unless the spirit and soul are reborn. The real life of the triune God is all around us, leads us and invites us to be one with Him. God will become for you what you need Him to be in order that you might enjoy the fullness of life: a relationship forever with Him. Amen