

Matthew 28:16-20; Holy Trinity/Pentecost 2; 6/11/17
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Martin Luther once said, "To try to deny the Trinity endangers your salvation, to try to comprehend the Trinity endangers your sanity." And, John Wesley, when talking about the Trinity said, "Bring me a worm that can comprehend a human being, and then I will show you a human being that can comprehend the Triune God!" The doctrine of the Trinity is difficult to comprehend and, consequently, as a church we have somewhat ignored giving the Trinity any significant focus. It is so much easier to think of a monotheistic God then try to understand God as three, and three in one. As a result, theologian Richard Rohr suggests the Holy Trinity has been "missing in action" for much of the past seventeen centuries.

And, yet, we **need** to think about the Trinity to gain a better understanding of God. Episcopal Bishop and theologian, Frederick Houk Borsch, when talking about the Trinity and our understanding, or lack thereof, writes:

There are probably a number of people who imagine that the idea of the Trinity was thought up by ivory-tower theologians who, typically, were making things more complicated than they needed to be and were obscuring the simple faith of regular believers. In fact, it seems that the process worked pretty much the other way around. Practicing believers and worshipers were driven by their experiences of God's activity to the awareness that God related in several different ways to the creation.... Thus, what these believers came to insist upon was

that God **had** to be recognized as being in different **forms** of relationship **with** the creation, in ways at least like different persons, and that all these ways were divine, that is, were of God. Yet there could not be three gods. God, to be the biblical God and the only God of all, had to be one God. This complex and profound faith was then handed over for the theologians to try and make more intelligible. They have been trying ever since.

Yet, the truth of the matter is that for us to better understand the God in whom we believe and place our trust, we need to maintain some understanding of the mystery of the Trinity. And key to that understanding is relationship. Relationship is the most compelling aspect of the Triune God. As Richard Rohr says, "Whatever is going on in God is a flow, a radical relatedness, a perfect communion between Three – a circle dance of love. And God is not just a dancer; God is the dance itself."

God is absolute relatedness and *God is the dance itself*. A dance is made up of many different entities – motion, emotion, resonance, rhythm, beat, energy, creativity – all of which have to relate to each other and come together in order to create the whole. We dance on the edge of mystery when we look upon this Ultimate Triangle of the Trinity – a model of interactive and open, loving relationship. And, there is no way we humans can fully grasp the doctrine of "God in Three Persons, Blessed Trinity." But, one helpful description that stands out for me comes from the New Zealand Prayer Book: God the Earth Maker, Jesus the Pain Bearer, and

Holy Spirit the Life-Giver. The Trinity is an Ultimate triangle that relates these three aspects of life that carry us to that which is foundational and true. God exists in our lives in those three intertwined ways: to create, to bear pain and to continue to offer new life—every day, in mystifying, surprising, and sometimes even terrifying ways.

God is the dance of relatedness. This divine dance of relationship is about the coming together of power and majesty, love and tenderness, presence and movement, in the divine — and joining with the raw and everyday reality of life. The divine dance is an active, physical and sweaty, rhythmic and pulsing, life-giving metaphor — and it is a reminder that as God lives among us, **we** participate in the dance of life.

In today's gospel reading, as we hear Jesus command his disciples to go, make disciples, and baptize them in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, he calls believers to participate in this divine dance of intertwining characteristics and relational rhythms. The greatness of this great commission is not just found in the geographical expansion of the mission that says go and make disciples of all nations. It also has to do with the expanded personal and community vision and courage to live into the whole nature of God. This God, this divine center, understands and lives in creativity, in standing with the pain of life, and in the sharing and the lifting

up of life to one of hope and forgiveness. As we participate in this divine dance, we are immersed and embedded into the whole being of God, whether we understand it or not. We are **not** powerless in the world; we are **not** disconnected from God as Creator, or from the redeeming work of God in human flesh, or from the very presence of that same God in the Holy Spirit, who dwells within us and among us and sometimes outside of us.

The baptism Jesus describes to his disciples on that mountain-top in today's reading is an invitation for **us** to **join** in the movement and mystery of this earth-making, pain bearing, life giving center to our lives. Although this divine dance has been in existence since the beginning, it is with the life, teaching, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ that we now get to do a new dance. The promise that Jesus gives in our reading from Matthew this morning is that we need never fear looking foolish, or executing the wrong moves or failing to find the rhythm in this dance Jesus invites us to participate in. We do not need to fear because Jesus himself shows us the moves and provides perpetual coaching as He leads us in the dance. As we follow him in this dance of relational love, we do not need to fear. We do **not** need to fear because Jesus says to us, "I am with you—and I trust **you** to be my hands, feet, and life on this earth." We do **not** have to fear

because we have been commissioned by the risen Jesus. And, the heart of our discipleship is bound up with the very life of the Trinity. Our lives and our discipleship are embedded in the relationship of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. As we participate in this dance with the Triune God – we who are saints and sinners, worshipers and doubters who don't have all the answers – we have been **commended** by Christ to go and make disciples. We have been commended and commissioned to invite others – people who are saints and sinners, worshipers and doubters and who don't have all the answers either – to join us and enter into the dance. We have been commissioned to invite others into this dance that is all about living together in loving relationship and living life that truly matters.

Come, join the dance of Trinity!

Please stand as we sing hymn # 412, *Come, Join the Dance of Trinity.*