

Isaiah 6:1-8; Trinity B (Pentecost 2); 5/17/18
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When I was serving my year of internship in the Fort Worth, Texas area and Trinity Sunday approached, my supervisor told me that I would be preaching on that day. He said he always had his interns preach on Trinity Sunday. The reason? Well, it is not the most popular festival Sunday for preachers, a majority of whom dread this Sunday, because the Trinity is all about church doctrine. Other festival Sundays during the church year celebrate events. Throughout the church year we focus on the many events that took place in the life of Christ. But, on Trinity Sunday, we celebrate a *church doctrine*, one that is notoriously hard to understand.

The doctrine of the Trinity itself cannot be found explicitly in scripture. Yet, it is scriptural to its core. It is the result of approximately 250 years of the early church reflecting on scripture and on its experience of God's self-revelation, as those encounters are recorded in scripture. I love the way Nadia Bolz Weber talks about the shaping of this doctrine. She writes:

God is three persons and one being. God is one and yet three. The Father is not the Son or the Spirit, the Son is not the Father or the Spirit, the Spirit is not the Father or the Son. But the Father, Son and Spirit all are God and God is one...So to review. $1+1+1=1$. That's simple enough. It's no wonder that so many of the early church councils were called to try and make sense of the Trinitarian formula. The church took it's time coming up with the doctrine of the Trinity.....much ink and much blood has been spilled on the matter, but it's hard to see what there is to actually celebrate on this "Church

Doctrine Sunday.” Where’s the good news in that? God as bad math?

The doctrine of the Trinity is a human attempt to explain who God is, who the Christian church has understood God to be, on the basis of Scripture. And, it is the result of the church's continuing experience of God **over** us, of God **with** us, and of God **in** us.

We talk so much about the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit that we need to remember they are three portions of the one reality we call God. In today’s Old Testament reading, Isaiah gives us this wonderful big picture understanding of God. Isaiah is in the temple and, in a vision, he is given a big picture experience in which he catches a glimpse of the grandness and greatness of God. He catches but a glimpse of the hem of God's robe, and even that is so imbued with God's holiness that Isaiah must turn away his eyes, crying out, "Woe is me." One of the many things being communicated in this passage is that God is holy, God is completely other and set apart. That is what holy means. God within God's self is so separate from everything else in existence, so different, that we simply have no reference for God – **no** analogy will completely do. Theologians know that every metaphor for God finally breaks down. God is like but not like; nothing in creation is comparable to God. So wholly other is God that even the seraphs – those heavenly beings that guard God's throne – shield

their eyes with their wings as they cry out their eternal hymn of praise: "Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord...." (And, by the way, that hymn as expressed in this Isaiah passage is where we get the *Holy, Holy, Holy*, we sing during the celebration of the Eucharist. Just take some time to ponder that.) In Isaiah's vision, the seraphs sing their song, and it reveals something more about God than simply God's holiness. As holy and set apart as God is, not only is heaven filled with God's glory. Earth is also filled with God's glory, filled with God's presence. And, here is the divine contradiction: God who is one, who is so beyond and unlike anything in the created order that nothing can be compared to God, is nonetheless personal, fully present, and at work in this world, revealing God's self to the world.

The Bible reveals this God coming to us in three distinct ways, as three distinct co-equals – over, with and in us. Yet, these three are one. God is over us as our source, our creator, our protector, the One above and beyond who governs justly throughout all creation – the Divine Parent Jesus called "Father," beginning and preserving all things. But this One God is also a loving Savior, revealed as a Son, who is reconciling, liberating, saving and redeeming so that we might live in communion with God. And this God also renews, transforms, empowers and sustains everything within creation and remains eternally present to us as the Spirit.

All of this is the work of the One God who is indivisible in being, purpose and work; God is one.

God the Father, or God the Mother as some name God, is a God **beyond** all gender, male or female. Remember, **nothing** in the created order is suitable for defining God and capturing God's essence, save what God gives us. We call the first person of the Trinity "Father" or "Mother" because this is the Parent of the Son and the source of the Spirit, the **source** of all that is.

We call the second person of the Godhead "Son" because he comes from the Father, was sent by God as God's incarnation to **reveal** God to us, to **be** God **with** us, to live out his life with and **for** us as **one of us**.

The Spirit of God is the wind of God Jesus spoke of in today's gospel. This Spirit or wind blows where it will, and the Spirit's work is to give new birth, to transform, renew, sustain, and make us children of God. The Spirit is the lifeline through whom the risen Son is present to us in life – it is the Spirit's work to make bread and wine into Jesus' body and blood for us and to use it as the means of drawing us into Christ's risen presence so that we can feed on him. One might say, the Holy Spirit is the "wireless connection between us and the Son and us and the Father because they, the three in One, are 'hard-wired' together in the one essence we call God."

Parent, Son and Holy Spirit – three distinct means of God being over and above us, with and for us, in and among us, and three distinct relationships with one another, who are nonetheless one in essence, will, purpose and work. And, they work in concert, the three playing their different parts – three voices forming a relational trio of grace-filled melodies that harmonize into one glorious sound, in order to accomplish the same purpose. And, the relationship between the three voices is like a dance of love. This relationship is all about love – a circle of self-giving, creating, liberating, healing love that is so inclusive it encompasses all of creation. And, as we look at this dance, God is not the dancer, but **God is the dance itself**, calling us into God’s love and inviting us to join the dance.

This is the mystery of God we celebrate on this Trinity Sunday – the God who **is** the dance of love. God over and above us, God for us and with us, God in us and among us. One God – the God who created us and makes us God’s own, the God who is revealed to us in Jesus Christ, and the God who is the Spirit in us and among us, inviting us into this mysterious dance of love and using us to share the good news of God’s love and purpose for all.