

Sunday June 7 2020 HOLY TRINITY SUNDAY

Preparing for worship:

Good morning – welcome to worship

I hope you are able to gather everyone in your household together this morning. If you are not alone - assign parts of this beforehand. If you don't have a Bible you can google the scripture readings and print them out too. Perhaps print out copies of this for everyone present.

The homily today has been written by Enid Blackwell. Enid is on our communications team, and sits on St. John's Church Council. She is a thoughtful Lutheran, a retired mediator and current gardener. The Hymns are from WOV & LBW books (+ELW ref.) The prayers are from Sunday & Seasons. Shut off all the distractions in your home. Sit in the quiet for a bit – take some deep breaths.

Two things to do ahead of time: 1) Place 2 cups, one with water, on your table.
2) Select YouTube hymns if you can. Suggested:

1. Mothering God: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sjjSttZEh4I> ;
2. The Church of Christ in Every Age– virtual 1 with Metro New York Synod: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kHRI-wez1DY>
3. On Our Way Rejoicing – 1 (may be 2ndp.) from Lutheran Church of Our Saviour, Tampa: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ax1mEFqIQTc>

The Gathering

Greeting: The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

Hymn 769 WOV/735 ELW: Mothering God (Alt.: 169 LBW Father Most Holy)

The Prayer of the Day:

Almighty God. Keep us steadfast in this faith, defend us in all adversity, and bring us at last into your presence, where you live in endless joy and love. Father, Son and Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

The Word

GENESIS 1:1-2:4 PSALM 8 2 CORINTHIANS 13:11-13 MATTHEW 28:16-20

Homily: Matthew text referenced

Last week, Pastor Norine prefaced her message with the words: “this was a difficult sermon for me to write, but it is honest and I hope you can receive it in that tone” – as she proceeded to affirm the need for us to mourn losses we experience in these unusual pandemic times, but to also, creatively, imagine how we can live and act in faithful community in a ‘new normal’ going forward.

Well, finding some words this week as we reflect on Trinity Sunday in these layered and difficult days has been somewhat tough for me. I find the doctrine and the creeds about the ‘Trinity’ far from easy. However, in doing some reading I find that I am in good company – including that of Luther, Julian of Norwich, and a bunch of much earlier folks with names like Arius, Tertullian and Augustine.

The Trinitarian formula appears in scripture only once, in today’s Gospel story, but the *doctrine* of the Trinity (a set of prescribed beliefs) does not show up in the Bible. Rather, it is a construct first formulated in the 4th century, and preceded and/or succeeded by a lot of division, deaths, wars, judgement and confusion. Not exactly gospel-like. Supposedly Luther wrote: “To deny the Trinity is to risk our salvation; but to try and explain the Trinity is to risk our sanity.”

I won’t risk our sanity, other than to suggest that the triune creeds attempt to define a **disputed identity**, have sadly often served to exclude or oppress, and have little to do with the *active relationship and message* of the great mystery of God and the Gospel. A divinity student, Katie Ford, once commented that, in the creeds “All the **undebated issues have been left out**. There is no mention of *love*, no mention of the *teachings* of Jesus, no mention of the kingdom of *God being present in our bodies and souls*, no mention of *God as the ground of life*.”

Can this three-some image still come alive in other ways in our experiences of love, relationships and healing? How about these reflections and stories of God?

- Lover, the Beloved, and the **Love** which flows between them. *Augustine*
(*here you may pause to pour water back and forth from one cup to the other*)

-Isn't it wonderful that we have this Doctrine of the Trinity that speaks of God as a fellowship, a **community**. . .all eternity the One who is called Father pours out all of God's being into the Son. .and the Son returning from all eternity this love and you have this movement between the two that is so tremendous that it is God the Holy Spirit.

Desmond Tutu

- Mack encountering the **healing** Trinity of Abba, an African American woman, Jesus, a carpenter, and Sarayu, mysterious Asian woman gardener, in the William Paul Young story, *The Shack*

-..the Trinity **models** the communal life to which we are called; a life together marked by **justice and peace, creativity, a place for all** marked by equality and held together by love.. . . .So with faith and courage we can be open to new ways and new visions, because of our dynamic, Three-in-One God who loves us and is always there for us. Ultimately we are called to respond.

Moira Ahearne, Presbyterian pastor, Greater New York area.

-The antidote to the creeds is to stop debating how Jesus is like God and to ask ourselves how is God like Jesus? Perhaps then we can begin to understand that the more we live like Jesus the more we can recognize God in us. Perhaps then we will rediscover the truth Jesus exemplified, and live as Jesus taught us to live. **Loving God and loving our neighbours.** This is the creed Jesus taught and lived.

Pastor Dawn Hutchings, Holy Cross Lutheran, Newmarket

So, where can **we experience the love, community and healing of God in these days** in our lives here? Perhaps we experience these as we both give and receive: solace, laughter, patience, understanding, service and care - in safe ways, within our faith and personal families, circles of friends, with neighbours and strangers and all our front-line community providers and health care workers.

And **how are we called to model justice and peace, creativity and a place for all** - today? Ahh, more difficult. While the orthodox construct of the Trinity doctrine and creed may be *tough* to grasp, the unhealthy social construct most of us *easily* live within is 'white privilege'. As Pastor Dawn notes, the reality is few would exchange living in that construct for the 'privilege' of living a racialized or indigenous life in Canada. Are we called to do the work of love by engaging our neighbours in deep conversations about the nature of our dis-ease? Perhaps we just have to risk saying nothing at all, and shut up and listen. It isn't always about

us and we don't always know what is right. And we may need to work and sacrifice to build a more equitable society, modelling the inclusion of Jesus and uplifted by the Spirit.

In all of this, may we learn to be grateful, and walk humbly with the God who is Love, and with us always. Amen.

HYMN 433 LBW/729 ELW The Church Of Christ In Every Age

Prayers of the People

Called into unity with one another and the whole creation, let us pray for our shared world. *A brief silence.*

God of community, you form us as your church. Guide our bishops, pastors, deacons, and all the baptized in sharing your life-giving good news with all the world. Strengthen us to be bold in our proclamation. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

God of creation, you called everything into being. Sustain this world with your renewing care. Inspire us to see waterways, plant life, birds, fish, insects, and mammals and call them good. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

God of counsel, all authority belongs to you. Encourage the leaders of this and every land to seek peace, equality, and unity. Instill wisdom in advocates who work toward justice in often ignored communities. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

God of care, you created us in your image. Help us see your likeness in one another. Open our eyes to see and attend to all who face oppression and suffering. Console, heal, and nourish all in need (*especially*). Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

God of companionship, you accompany these two churches and all who join us. As the rhythms of summer begin, and as our province re-opens protect all who travel, renew all who will enjoy a time of sabbath, and shelter all who will not be protected from the sun's heat. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

God of compassion, you comfort us in our grief with the promise of the resurrection. We give you thanks for the saints of all time and in our lives

especially Alan Kuehl, father of our organist Karen Prince who was buried June 6th. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Receive these prayers, O God, and those too deep for words; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

The Lord's Prayer

Offering Prayer:

God of goodness and growth, all creation is yours, and your faithfulness is as firm as the heavens. Water and word, wine and bread: these are signs of your abundant grace. Nourish us through these gifts, that we might proclaim your steadfast love in our communities and in the world, through Jesus Christ, our strength and our song. **Amen.**

HYMN LBW 260/ELW 537 On Our Way Rejoicing

BLESSING

Neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth,

nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus.

God, the creator, ✠ Jesus, the Christ,

and the Holy Spirit, the comforter,

bless you and keep you in eternal love.

Amen.

DISMISSAL

Go in peace. Christ is with you.

Thanks be to God.