

**“God’s plan for having fun.”**

**Genesis 1:1-27; 31 & 2:1-3      Matthew 28:16-20    2 Corinthians 13:11-13**

In the church year the Sunday after Pentecost is observed as Trinity Sunday so this morning I am going to attempt to talk about the Trinity. To help us get into this subject I want to begin by asking a couple questions that I don’t want anyone to answer out loud. I don’t want anyone to answer them because the questions sound, well actually they are, very judgmental and I don’t think there is anyone here who needs additional lessons in being judgmental – most of us do just fine in that regard.

Have you ever looked at a couple and said to yourself, “I don’t see why they are together?” “What in the world could she have seen in him?” Or “What in the world could he have seen in her?” But then, have you had the occasion to actually get to know this couple and then, the more you got to know them, you begin to realize what brought them together and appreciate the love that animates their relationship.

We all know, but sometimes forget, that wherever there is great love, wherever there is intimate relationship, there is the need for respect and reverence. And humility and modesty are values that need to be nurtured. All love relationships have a need to be expressed, but no love relationship can ever be defined just by talking about it.

That is the dilemma every preacher faces when he or she stands to talk about God. When we have our weekly hand bell choir practice usually David Brown spends a few minutes leading us in some warm-up exercises that are found in a book that is titled “Conundrums.” Trying to explain one God in three persons can feel like a real conundrum, a virtual impossibility, and it is.

Someone once asked how any person of intelligence could possibly believe in the Trinity. How can anyone believe that three equals one? When that question was asked the reply was made, “Why would you think that we should be able to understand the arithmetic of heaven now?” If we want to ask difficult questions there is no shortage of them. Another question that can create just such a conundrum is on the cover of our bulletin this morning. It is a prayer from the Psalms, “When I consider your heavens ... what is man that you are mindful of him?”

We are often tempted to think that with our intellect and ingenuity we ought to be able to “get to the bottom of things” in most of life’s dilemmas. That is not always true and there may be a price to succeeding that is highly questionable. The following story illustrates that.

There once was an energetic, small boy who one Christmas received a gift from his grandparents of a drum. This little boy loved his drum so much that he

banged on the drum all day, and he loved every minute of it. He would not be quiet no matter what anyone said or did. (Now I want to ask you to try to quiet all the little sermons about permissive parenthood that may be going on in your minds at the moment. This is just a story and that isn't the point.)

The boy's parents had no shortage of advice about how to deal with this situation. Some suggested the boy should be advised that if he continued to make so much noise he would eventually perforate his eardrums and completely lose his hearing. The boy did not even flinch at that warning. Another declared that drumming was actually a sacred and holy activity and should be carried out only on special occasions. A third bought a large supply of ear plugs and offered them to all the neighbors. A fourth tried to distract the boy by offering him a book to read. Nothing made more than a little impact until one wise guy came along.

He handed the boy a hammer and chisel and quietly whispered in his ear, "I wonder what is INSIDE that drum?" Of course, this approach may have worked to silence the boy, but it was at the cost of destroying the drum. In all our faith there is an interweaving of reverence and doubt. Matthew does not exclude doubt from the experience of the disciples but neither does he allow doubt to dilute the expression of reverence in their worship.

It is very tempting to react to this story by thinking to ourselves, "Who cares about the drum? At least we have some peace and quiet!" But there is also another perspective, and that is the perspective of love.

Love can never be entirely measured by our own comfort. If you have to analyze and dissect love in order to enter into it, we may live a very lonely life. So it is with the Trinity. My suggestion is that we begin with the simple statement of faith that "God is love." It is a very simple revelation and statement of faith. But in its simplicity it makes all the difference in the world. That statement of faith that "God is love" is like a lens that brings a whole other dimension to our reading of scripture.

A couple weeks ago we talked about where Luke describes the Ascension of Jesus and right before that Luke tells us that Jesus "opened their minds to understand the scriptures."<sup>1</sup> Jesus opened their minds through his personal expression of love to them. Love is never just a concept or an ideal.

Love is always personal. That is why we say that if God is love then God cannot exist in isolation. Love must always be expressed. There must be another. Wherever there is love there is a lover and a beloved.

Those who live in singleness know this reality and struggle with and seek to find peace in ways that are often very creative and full of grace. It is difficult for me personally to talk with much authenticity about this because I have "flunked

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<sup>1</sup> Luke 24.45

singleness” several times in my life, but I have had a number of conversations about this with my wife Christine. As most of you know, before we were married she was single all her adult life. That challenge became an opportunity for her to learn to live her life and faith nurturing many friendships. Besides lover and beloved perfected love requires a third, an outward expression of that love that is shared.

Couples who are married also know that reality. No matter how much “in love” you are, you can only stare into each others eyes for so long. In order for love to remain alive it calls for some outward expression of that love. The most personal image I have of that reality was when we were with my son and his wife right after their son was born.

Besides the thrill of holding my new born grandson the next image I treasure is of Lenny and Tonia looking at River together. When mother and father look at their first born son they are in complete loving unity, but they are much more than one because they are three. Each parent can say, “This is my child; both can say “this is our child.” The child, as it learns to speak can say, “My father, my mother.”

I want to suggest that the heavenly mystery of the Trinity interprets the earthly mystery, and the earthly mystery in some way helps to interpret the heavenly mystery.” The earthly pattern of the mystery of the Trinity is the trinity of the family. I would never pretend to know all the love that is shared between my son and his wife and their son. But I can always love them.

I hope that can be a useful analogy with which to approach the Trinity of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit with reverence and faith. Our life and our very existence is an expression of the love of God ane Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. In love there is always more than can be expressed.

We worship a God who is always more. God is Creator but God is always more than Creator. We may very well come to the place in human existence where some will have the capacity to understand big bang theory but that can never explain the God we worship because God did not just create the world and then leave it to run on its own. We do not worship a process or a theory, but a provider who continues to create and move among us.

Each day is a new day, thanks to the Spirit of God within our midst. A week or so ago there was a devotional in the Upper Room which had a wonderful insight. The devotional reminded us that because God is love and because God is with us, no matter how difficult our circumstances are, no matter how much we feel we do not measure up, no matter the difficulties that surround us, “the good days” even “the Best days” are not behind any of us, they are always in front of us. Because God is with us, we have nothing to fear.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> The Upper Room for May 7, 2008

There is a human tendency to compare ourselves with others and to think that perhaps others have fewer struggles than we do. That is always an illusion. The last several years we have been blessed with a District Superintendent with a real Pastor's heart. He always seems to have a smile on his face and he always takes time to ask how you are and then the patience to listen to your response. This week at our last Pastor's meeting under his leadership he shared just a bit of the personal struggles his family was dealing with.

It was a good reminder to me that God's love never encourages us to compare our circumstances with another, but the love of God expressed toward us in the Trinity always empowers us to identify with, to find some common ground with all our brothers and sisters in Christ, in fact with the entire human family. In the love of God expressed in the trinity we are all brothers and sisters in one family.

It is a relationship that none of us can fully appreciate or understand or respond to, especially in this day when we have the capacity to see pictures in every one of our homes of human suffering in places on the other side of the world. This last week we have seen the consequences of a typhoon in Myanmar, and earthquake in China, tornadoes here in the United States, fires here in Florida. The love of God expressed in the Trinity tells us that God identifies with and is personally involved wherever there is suffering and human need.

The Trinity is not an explanation of evil and suffering. It does not deny it but it does not explain it. What it does say is that we do not need to be shy about identifying evil. We are not encouraged to ignore the suffering of others. But the love of God expressed in the Trinity will not allow us make the defeat of our enemies our objective, for God loves our enemies just as much as us.

During the lowest ebb of WW Two our sister country Great Britain was subjected to almost nightly bombing especially the capital of London. The novelist George Orwell, who later wrote 1984 wrote of that experience. "As I write, highly civilized human beings are flying overhead trying to kill me ... Most of them, I have no doubt, are kind hearted, law-abiding men who would never dream of committing murder in private life. On the other hand, if one of them succeeds in blowing me to pieces with a well-placed bomb, he will never sleep any the worse for it."<sup>3</sup>

If being at one with the love of God is our goal then forgiveness and reconciliation will always be our strategy and love will always be our method. It is a method that the world will always label as madness and foolishness. It is the wisdom of God. It is a method that is both beyond each of us, but it springs from a seed that God has planted deep within each of us.

How can we speak of a God who is both high and deep, beyond our comprehension yet dwelling deep within us? How can we even dare to speak of a God who encompasses all that has ever been, and claims all that surrounds

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<sup>3</sup> Quoted in American Scholar, March, 1999.

us, and transcends all time by what is yet to be? Perhaps the best we can do is to worship in silence.

One philosopher has put it this way, “all our troubles derive from one basic fault: our inability to sit still in a room.” In reverent silence in the stillness of our hearts, by faith we hear the loving word of God, “remember, I am with you always.” With that, we will never be alone, in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Rev Stephen Hoffman  
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First United Methodist Church of Palmetto