



Trinity Sunday

Readings: Matthew 28:16-20

2 Corinthians 13: 11-13

Matthew 28:16-20 (GNT)

¹⁶ The eleven disciples went to the hill in Galilee where Jesus had told them to go. ¹⁷ When they saw him, they worshipped him, even though some of them doubted. ¹⁸ Jesus drew near and said to them, "I have been given all authority in heaven and on earth. ¹⁹ Go, then, to all peoples everywhere and make them my disciples: baptize them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ and teach them to obey everything I have commanded you. And I will be with you always, to the end of the age."

2 Corinthian 13:11-13 (GNT)

¹¹ And now, my friends, good-bye! Strive for perfection; listen to my appeals; agree with one another; live in peace. And the God of love and peace will be with you.

¹² Greet one another with the kiss of peace.

All of God's people send you their greetings.

¹³ The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

Reflection:

Today is Trinity Sunday. The Sunday in the Church when we celebrate the Christian doctrine of the Trinity. - the three persons of God.

The word Trinity does not appear anywhere in the Bible. It would be over a century before theologian began to use words like 'Trinity' as a shorthand way of expressing one God in threefold form.

The New Testament readings today are two particular places in the Bible where we find mention of the Triune God - Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Jesus refers to God in this way in

the Great Commission of Matthew 28:19 & 20: Go then, to all people everywhere and make them my disciples, baptize them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit....And I will be with you always, to the end of the age.'

Paul, in his closing remarks of his 2nd letter to the church at Corinth says 'The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all. (13:13)

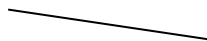
Once again, mentioning the Triune God - Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

But how do we understand this idea of three 'persons' in one God - the Trinity as it has been named? It is perhaps the most difficult doctrine of the Christian faith to understand. This past week I have spent a lot of time reading and praying and trying to discern a way to explain the Trinity not only to others, but also to myself! I am still not sure I truly understand it, but I think I have a measure of it, and that is enough for me. So, I will now make an attempt to explain it to you, via various writings and descriptions that I have discovered during my research. Hopefully, and I pray, one will make sense to you and open the door to you understanding the nature of the Trinity.

C S Lewis, the writer and lay theologian, wrote many books of fiction, among them The Chronicles of Narnia and The Screwtape letters. He also wrote non fiction books, including one titled Mere Christianity. It is in this that he attempts to explain the concept of the Trinity:

In space, he writes, you can move in three ways - to left or right, backwards or forwards, up or down. Every direction is either one of these three or a compromise between them. They are called the three Dimensions.

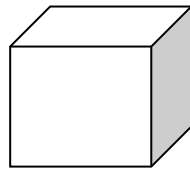
If, however, you are only using one dimension then you can only draw a straight line:



If you are using two dimensions, you could draw a shape, perhaps a square, made up of four straight lines:



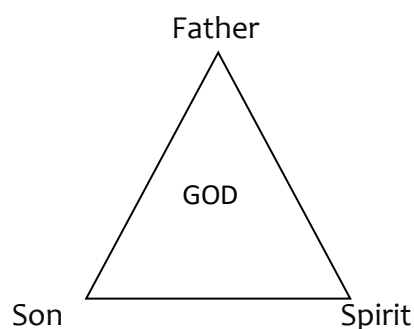
In three dimensions, you can build a solid body, like a cube, and a cube is made of six squares:



The Trinity involves the same principle, says Lewis. On the human level, one person is one being, and any two persons are two separate beings, like the two dimensional squares. When you come to the Divine level though you enter a new dimension, a God dimension, a being that is three Persons whilst remaining one Being, just as a cube is six squares but remains one cube. If we lived in a world of only two dimensions, we would not be able to properly imagine a 3 dimensional body, but we would get a sort of idea of it. The same is true of the Trinity, we cannot properly imagine it, but because of what we already know we can sort of understand it. (*Chapt 24, Mere Christianity, C.S.Lewis*)

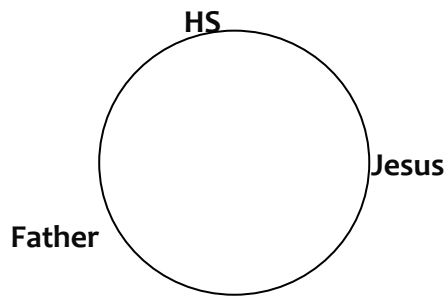
I found that to be a helpful description of the Trinity. I especially liked the realisation that we cannot grasp the concept of a Triune God completely but get a hint of what it means for Father, Son and Holy Spirit to be three in one.

However, even though Father, Son and Holy Spirit are three in one, in God, we sometimes create a hierarchy of our own. We imagine God the Father to be the head or most important of the three, with the Son and the Holy Spirit beneath Him. A little like a triangle:



Sometimes this leads to us only talking to one 'person' addressing God as either Father, Son or Holy Spirit. (for example: typically, but not always, 'Traditional' churches speak to the Father, 'evangelical' churches speak to the Son, and 'charismatic' churches speak to the Holy Spirit).

So perhaps the answer is to see the Trinity as a circle. With no beginning or ending, no top or bottom. God in an existing and eternal relationship, equal with the Son and the Holy Spirit. An unending relationship of equals, each bringing and being a different characteristic of God:



It was at this point I then discovered a story that explains the Trinity to children. This was most useful! It takes an apple:

If we cut the apple in half we can see it is made up of skin, flesh and a core, or seeds. All three serve different purposes. The skin protects the apple. The flesh is food and is good to eat, The seeds when planted will create another apple tree with many more apples.

We can use the image of the apple to understand the Trinity. The skin is like God the Father, who protects us and loves us. The flesh reminds us of God the Son, Jesus, who became flesh and came to earth to show us the Father's love by dying for our sins. The seeds are like the Holy Spirit, through Him we are given power to grow in faith.

But all three are part of the apple. The skin is apple, the flesh is apple, the seeds are apple. Together they make up an apple. In the same way the Father is God, Jesus Christ the Son is God, the Holy Spirit is God. They are all present in the One God.

So, there we have it. Three ways to think of the Trinity and to try and understand its' concept.

I hope that has been helpful, even though it has looked a little like a maths lesson!

We worship a God of three parts. God the Father, the Creator, who made us and all things and declared 'It is good'. A Creator God who loves us as His children, whoever or wherever we are, whatever colour, ethnicity, or status. But something happened, sin invaded the world and God's creation was spoiled. So God the Son entered into His spoiled creation in order to transform it from within. He came to earth to re-establish communion with God. He journeyed through every stage of life, including death, to show us how to live and to help us become truly human again, as God intended. Thirdly we see God the Holy Spirit coming into our hearts and our lives, shepherding His new creation which has received forgiveness for our sins through God the Son's death, resurrection and ascension.

God the Father who created us and loves us.

God the Son who lived, died and rose again for us to restore our relationship with God and loves us.

God the Holy Spirit who dwells in the hearts of those who love God, giving us power to live as God intended, and loves us.

One amazing God who loves us in amazing ways! One amazing God who is present with us to guide us, restore us and empower us. Or as someone once put it:

'God loves you just the way you are, but He loves you too much to leave you that way.'

I pray that this Trinity Sunday you understand the depth of God's love for you, feel the presence of Jesus surround you, and feel the power of the Holy Spirit enabling you to share that love with those you meet, whether in person or 'virtually' this coming week.

Often at the end of services or meetings we stand and say The Grace together. I wonder if you realised, before seeing it in the reading this morning, that it was written by Paul to the church of Corinth?

These last few verses of Paul's letter sum up so much of what being a Christian is all about. They place the focus firmly on the God of the Trinity we know in and through Jesus and the Holy Spirit, and is possibly the best and only way to end this morning's reflection:

¹¹ And now, my friends, good-bye! Strive for perfection; listen to my appeals; agree with one another; live in peace. And the God of love and peace will be with you.

¹² Greet one another with the kiss of peace.

All of God's people send you their greetings.

¹³ The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

Amen

If you would like to see a short film explaining the Trinity as an apple, here is the link:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ltw2J6k7E-M>

Prayer and Blessing : *(from Fire & Bread by Wild Goose publications)*

May God be the road on which you travel:
He the mountains
on which you are tested and challenged
He the wells
at which you find healing and peace.

May Christ be the light by which you travel:
He the vision
which informs and enlarges you.
He the lodestar
shining in your darkest nights.

May the Spirit inspire you as you travel:
She the restlessness
driving you onwards.
She the stillness
leading you to the heart of God.

May the Trinity, the Three,
go with you as you travel;
and may your journey
begin
continue
and end
in Them.

Amen

Music:

King of Kings - Hillsong Worship

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dQl4izxPeNU>