

“The Dance of the Trinity”
A Sermon by Rev. Victoria ByRode
Trinity Sunday
June 7, 2009
Scripture: Romans 8:12-17
John 3:1-17

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION: *Creator, Redeemer, Breath of Life, innumerable are your names, uncountable are your actions, immeasurable is your mercy. As we hear and think about your Word to us this day, help us hear what you would have us hear and live as you would have us live. Amen.*

There are many things in life which you and I may not understand. For some people, it's modern art.

A young woman goes to her first art show at an art gallery. She studies the paintings carefully. One is a huge canvas. The canvas is painted black and there are big blobs of yellow paint splattered all over it. The next painting is a murky gray color with drips of purple paint streaked across it. She walks over to the artist and says, “I don't understand your paintings.”

“I paint what I feel inside me,” explains the artist.

She looks at the gray painting once more and asks, “Have you ever tried Alka-Seltzer?”

Some of us may not understand modern art. Some of us may not understand some kinds of music. I once saw a list of the top ten things men understand about women. Beside each number the line was blank. Don't you love that!

There are many things in life we do not understand. Today on the church calendar is Trinity Sunday, the day we celebrate a doctrine that none of us is capable of truly understanding or explaining.

Pastor Keith Krell tells of spending time with his oldest child Joshua several years ago.

While Krell was sitting in his glider, Joshua went over to his toy box and grabbed a tennis ball and brought it back to him. Then Joshua went and got a nerf ball and returned to his father with it, as well. Lastly Joshua went back to the toy box and box and picked up a mini basketball and did the same thing. The next thing Joshua did was try to take all of the balls from his father's lap and hold them. But...no matter how hard he tried, he just couldn't hold all three. His hands were just not big enough to handle all three balls at one time.

“The Trinity is just like that,” says Pastor Krell, “three-in-one is just more than our small, finite minds can grasp.”

What we have this Sunday is a familiar text and an unfamiliar doctrine. What binds the two of these together is a sense of the mystery. Birth is a mystery, and to be born from above, or again, as Nicodemus (mis)understands adds to the mystery of birth. This is a rich passage of scripture with multiple layers of meaning, and it is worth swimming around in these waters. Nicodemus comes to Jesus at night. The darkness is symbolic in John's gospel, and not accidental. Nicodemus is separated somehow from Jesus, even though he is very religious. He is a seeker. Even the people who come to church every Sunday are sometimes searching for something; their lives punctuated more with question marks than periods. Nicodemus is seeking something. Maybe we are as well.

Jesus speaks about the possibility of birth, or change, and Nicodemus is resistant to the idea. Jesus says, “*The wind blows where it wills, and you hear the sound of it, but you don't know where it comes from or where it is going.*”

The wind, the Spirit (each with an origin in the Hebrew “ruach”), blows where it wills. I am learning that I can see the movements of the Spirit if I am observant and watching, but I cannot control them. If we live long enough that we should give up on the illusion that we are in control of anything; shouldn't we? This realization is challenging, because all of us would like to determine our destinies, but it is helpful in that realizing our limitations teaches us to rely on

God and each other. Realizing our dependency on God and our inter-dependency with one another is the wonder and mystery of new birth. This same wonder and mystery is present in the Triune God. Whenever we see God we know that, like the wind, there is more to God than we see.

We realize this movement more often than you might think. For instance there may be times when you are talking with someone and you are in deep conversation. You know what I mean, you have moved beyond the pleasantries and the small-talk, and all of a sudden something is revealed – something your dream about – a way in which have been hurt – someone you have loved – and suddenly you have moved from familiarity to mystery. And you think, “I thought I knew this person, but there is much more here.”

In the presence of the Trinity – Father, Son and Holy Spirit, we move from the familiar – what we know – to the mysterious – what we do not know. This movement happens most frequently in the sacraments of baptism and the celebration of the Lord's Supper. In baptism we ask for the outpouring of God's Spirit, to bless the gift of water and those who receive it. In the prayers that have their origin in the very earliest Christian communities, we use the language of the Trinity, and we move from mystery – the very nature of God – to the familiar – how God is present in our lives.

The same is true when we celebrate the Lord's Supper. We recall our creation and the Creator in whose image we were formed and whose breath gives us life. We remember the life and teachings, the death and resurrection of Jesus. We pray for an outpouring of the Spirit to bless these gifts of bread and wine.

When we sing the Doxology, when we join in reciting the Apostles' Creed, when we baptize in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, when we give thanks for the holy mystery that is a part of the table our Lord prepares for us, when we are blessed to go out into the world as Christ's disciples, we are given a glimpse, a clue, a foretaste of the glory divine.

We come to know God, but with humility, as Paul writes in 1 Corinthians, “now we know only in part.” To affirm the Trinity is to confess that we see a portion of who this God is, the one who blesses in creation, saves us by the cross, and sustains us by the indwelling of the Spirit. We know in part. The rest is mystery, a holy mystery.

Mystery as it may be, though, whenever we have a class of young people who want to join the church – some needing to be baptized – some reaffirming their faith – one of the things we ask of them is to write a statement of faith. All of our youths take this assignment seriously and really try to write what it is that they believe. Because our young people have chosen to be confirmed at the 8:45 service, and because I would love for those of you in this service to get to know our young people, I am going to read to you a portion of the statement of faith written by one of our young people. It is amazing to me that it is sometimes through the youth that we hear what God wants us to hear. But then again, don’t I remember something about a “little child leading us”?

These are some of the words of Lindsey Gow’s Statement of Faith:

“I believe” is a very powerful statement. It gives people an insight to what makes you the unique person that you are. I can’t think of a more appropriate place to start than to say that I believe in God and that He gave his one and only precious little boy away to be crucified so that not only could our sins be forgiven but they have been and always will be. I believe that not only is God everywhere, but He is in each and every one of us.

My favorite Bible verse is from First Corinthians. “Love is patient, love is kind. It doesn’t envy, it doesn’t boast, it isn’t proud. It isn’t proud. It isn’t rude, is not self seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love doesn’t delight in evil but rejoices in the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres”. This states who God is in my eyes and describes how loving, forgiving, caring and trustworthy He is. I believe God is

someone who will care about you no matter what.

Jesus is our Lord and Savior. He died on the cross for us and we can always look to him for forgiveness. He is our Father in heaven, the Son of God, and persevered through all the torture until He was crucified just so our sins of the past, present and future could be forgiven. Jesus Christ is my Savior, my Redeemer, my best friend. I believe he died upon the cross for me, for you, and for every other living soul out there and I believe in him with all my mind, and with all soul, with all my heart and all my strength.

To make sure I don’t make a wrong turn on this crazy one way street of life, God gave me the Holy Spirit. It guides me here on earth and it works in tune with my conscience to keep me out of trouble and bring me closer to God. The Holy Spirit is a part of me and all of us and aids us in times of need. The Holy Spirit shaped me into who I am. I believe that the Holy Spirit is my guiding angel on my shoulder.”

How is it that someone so young would be able to accept, believe and understand something which for many of us adults is hard?

The title of my sermon this morning is actually based on a relatively new hymn in a hymn book in the Lutheran Church. The words of the last verse go like this:

“Come, join the dance of Trinity, before all worlds begun – we sing the praises of the Three, the Father, Spirit, Son. Let voices rise and interweave, by love and hope set free, to shape in song this joy this life: the dance of Trinity.

May it be so for you and for me. Amen.

Thanks to King Duncan for his sermon, “Afraid No More”, William H. Willimon for his sermon, “Don’t Be Too Conscientious”, Kenneth H. Carter, Jr. in Lectionary Homiletics volume xx, number 4, Lindsey Gow for her Statement of Faith, and Richard Leach for his words to the hymn, “Come Join the Dance of Trinity.”

**“The Dance of the Trinity”
A Sermon by Rev. Victoria ByRoade
Trinity Sunday
June 7, 2009**

**Scripture: Romans 8:12-17
John 3:1-17**



**The First Presbyterian Church
of Dunedin**

**455 Scotland Street
Dunedin, Florida 34698**

(727) 733-2318 fax (727) 738-4297

WEBSITE: fpcdunedin.org

E-mail:

officeadminfpc@tampabay.rr.com

Victoria ByRoade, Pastor