**St. David’s Episcopal Church**

Trinity Sunday

June 12, 2022

Sermon by the Rev. Kate Wilson

Proverbs 8:1-4, 22-31Canticle 13 Romans 5:1-5 John 16:12-15

✠

Trinity Sunday is a tough preaching Sunday. The immediate thing, Trinity Sunday itself isn’t so tough: it’s a day to celebrate and glorify the Trinity, one God in three persons. We Episcopalians love the Trinity so much we have well over one hundred different Trinity Episcopal Churches in this country. I don’t know how many; I quit counting at one hundred. We have eight in Indiana alone: Anderson, Bloomington, Connersville, Fort Wayne, Indianapolis, Lawrenceburg, Logansport, Michigan City, and one Trinity Anglican Church in Evansville.

You’d think something so popular would be a snap to explain and believe in, wouldn’t you? Our readings this morning include a poem from the Book of Proverbs that glorifies Wisdom, something **Christian interpreters** have cited as the Holy Spirit as well as Sophia, the Greek word for Wisdom, as the feminine face of God. **Christian interpreters** have linked Jesus to Sophia and all the Wisdom literature in the Hebrew Bible. I love it, but to any good Jew such talk would be heresy and blasphemy. The interpretations are beautiful and welcoming, in my view, because they enrich and support the Holy Spirit *and* Jesus as we know them. If it invites people into relationship with God, all the better. We have a Canticle glorifying God. And we have Paul’s letter to the Romans naming all three persons of the Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit:

Since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, …. we also boast in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us.

Suffering produces endurance….That would make a spectacular refrigerator magnet if it were not so long. Need to keep it for greeting cards, I think.

And we have the Gospel of John, John whose role was at all times to point to Jesus as the Christ and the Son of God. John, who writes of Jesus sparing his disciples, knowing they were not ready for more. And the “more” is what Jesus entrusted to the Spirit.

But neither Paul nor John had established a sure foundation for us in the Trinity; what it is, how it works, what it means. Neither spoke clearly or plainly about a belief that is so essential to Christianity. A belief we vow to when reviewing our Baptismal vows, one so beautifully depicted in the symbol on our bulletin. One so hard to grasp. A concept that is a serious stumbling block for many.

Some of you may not care one iota about all of this Trinity business. That expression, one iota, comes to us directly from the Council of Nicea in 325. Why? After debate and literal fights split the Christian community over the relationship between Jesus and God the Father, the Council was called to sort it all out. They were to settle the matter and establish a doctrine.

This was critical. Bishops traveling to Nicea were murdered by opponents to keep them silent. In this corner, we have the Arians, followers of Arius, who insisted that Jesus was one step down from the Father. He might be God too, but he wasn’t equal. In this corner, we have the Orthodox—or who became the Orthodox—who believed that Jesus and the Father were of the same essence. The debate was between homo**i**ousios, a Greek word for “similar essence” and homoousios, meaning “same substance” or “same essence”. Jesus Christ is of one and the same essence as the Father.

Hear it? Homo**i**ousious – similar essence vs. homoousios – same essence. The murderous debate was over the difference the letter iota made and the very significant difference between the word meanings. It was all about one iota.

It was the Arians who believed that God and Jesus Christ were of similar essence, and that God came before Jesus. God created Jesus, in short. You do know who heretics are, yes? Heretics are people who lose the religious battle. It was the winners who crafted our Nicene Creed:

**We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one Being with the father.**

And the Holy Spirit makes three. The wording concerning the Holy Spirit sounds more like an afterthought to me: **We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son….**  The case was somewhat closed with those words, and I am not student enough to delve further.

This saddens me because it is the Holy Spirit who most motivates me. It is the Holy Spirit I can see at work among you, within my life, and in the lives of so many people I know. It is the Holy Spirit who has directed me to God the Creator and to Christ. Perhaps I am a Pentecostal at heart. But no, I have come to have room for all three. Even though the Pentecostals sure know how to give their services an extra kick!

I said last week, I think it was, that I see the Trinity as three doors, perhaps doors with images on them: one appears as a strong creator who invites us to co-create and express our love to him, love the creator has given us. One appears as a human who invites us to live as he taught - to live by and of and with love for our neighbors and for ourselves. Who invites us to be fellow children of his Father. One depicted as breath, as the giver of life and wisdom, as the inspiration to carry on. To endure, as Paul wrote. That giver of life carried God’s love to Mary, to give us the gift of love, Jesus Christ incarnate.

Once we open the door, whichever door calls to us, we walk into the very essence, one and the same, no matter which door we have chosen.

We can say that our Trinity was born at the Council of Nicea, where the three distinct persons define *who* God is, while the one essence defines *what* God is. [[1]](#footnote-1) Love alive and moving, with more than one entry point. Hear what the Spirit is saying to God’s people.

1. |  |  |  |
   | --- | --- | --- |
   |  | *The Trinity: Three Persons in One Nature* | Frank Sheed, 1897-1981| From [*Theology and Sanity*](http://www.ignatius.com/Products/THAS-P/theology-and-sanity.aspx?src=iinsight) | Ignatius Insight | **The Trinity: Three Persons in One Nature | Frank Sheed | From** [***Theology and Sanity***](http://www.ignatius.com/Products/THAS-P/theology-and-sanity.aspx?src=iinsight) **| Ignatius Insight** |

   [↑](#footnote-ref-1)