

Grace and peace to you my friends and fellow sojourners from Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior.

Today is Trinity Sunday. If you have ever or, more likely, still consider the resurrection, the ascension, and even Pentecost concepts or ideas that are hard to grasp then the concept or idea of the Trinity, or the Triune God, or the Trinitarian God is really going to fry your brain. So let me begin by quoting from the overall introduction for today from Sundays and Seasons which says in part: *“Though the word trinity is not found in scriptures, today’s second reading includes the apostolic greeting that begins the liturgy: The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all. In the Gospel Jesus sends the disciples forth to baptize in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit.”*

How about a few random thoughts. First, since Pentecost has occurred and the “Spirit” is a more active participant in our existence, I can point out that the Trinity is considered to be God, Jesus, and the Spirit. Second, the concept of the Trinity, or a Triune God is central to the core beliefs of many denominations and key to those very denominations working together in what is often called “full communion” which includes among other things the sharing of pastors. On the other hand, there are even other denominations and many faiths that do not consider the Trinity relevant.

Third, you might have noticed in our first reading from Genesis the reference to a “wind from God.” Many translations use the term Spirit rather than wind when translating this text. Fourth, who determined that these three parts should be called Father, Son, and Holy Spirit? Was it God? Or was it the patriarchal writers buried deep in a patriarchal society? I do not really know but you may or may not have noticed that I, in fact, try not to use male oriented titles and pronouns when possible, although I do sometimes slip up from force of habit. My rationale for this is twofold – in Genesis both male and female are created in God’s image which is furthered emphasized in Paul’s comments in Galatians 3 verses 26 through 29 which read: “So in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.”

Fifth, Saint Augustine said: *“Only material bodies fill or occupy material space. The Godhead is beyond all space; ...It is not God, if you have understood it. But if it is God, you have not understood it.”* That kind of sounds to me like a complicated way of saying God’s ways are not our ways and our ways are not God’s ways. It is a simple question of our faith, or as I often like to say, the faith that God gives us.

Stanley Saunders points out in his commentary on our gospel reading today that each of the Gospels ends in a distinctive way. Mark focusses on the empty tomb and the fear of the first witnesses; Luke on the appearances of the risen Jesus to the disciples, the ascension, and their preparation as witnesses; and John on a series of appearances of the resurrected Christ, especially to Peter. On the other hand, Matthew, in our reading today, depicts the resurrected Jesus commissioning the disciples for mission.

These verses in our reading today, or at least a part of them, are often called the “Great Commission.” This is a way to justify Christian evangelism around the world, at least for many. If you focused on the word “Go” then you are not alone but rest in great company with the likes of Billy Graham and others. The problem is that “go” is not a verb in the Greek version of this sentence. I have probably mentioned this to you before but it does warrant oft repetition. Rob Plummer in his blog provides a fairly detailed analysis of this sentence in Greek. He says that there is only one explicit imperative or verb in the Greek text and it is “disciple” or “make disciples.” There are also three participles, words having characteristics of both verbs and adjectives. In this Greek text the three participles are “go or going”, “baptizing”, and “teaching.” So, in effect, a better way to understand this sentence is to simply say; “as you are going through life wherever you are, you should disciple those around you in the fashion of Jesus and you should baptize them and teach them as Jesus taught so that they may be believers.” You should also understand that making disciples is like making a horse drink – not very likely. In fact, making disciples is actually the function of the Spirit in us.

What is in a name? Many people, in fact, change their names especially such as entertainers. Have you ever thought of changing your name? Have you changed your name? I know that Nanette likes her names mostly because she likes the meanings ascribed to her names. I also can remember a time when I actually changed the pronunciation of my name from “Ronald” to “Wonald” with a “W” because all the male names in my family started with a “W”.

Again, what is in a name? Or, for that matter, what is in a gender? I have previously told you that the Bible says that God’s chosen name is “I AM.” I also believe that Jesus lays claim to that same “I AM” name especially in the seven more known “I AM” statements and the two lesser known “I AM” statements in the Gospel of John. I also believe most of us hear these familiar statements from Jesus as first person statements but what if they are not first person but rather third person?

Hear then the good news according to the words of Jesus:

“God, the bread of life.”

“God, the light of the world.”

“God, the door”.

“God, the good shepherd.”

“God, the resurrection and the life.”

“God, the way, the truth, and the life.”

“God, the true vine.”

“Before Abraham was born, God.”

Does this maybe give you a different perspective on God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit?

The significance of God’s self-given name encompasses all that God is, and how we are to relate to God.

God created us to be in relationship – relationship with God, relationship with creation, and relationship with each other.

Dave Allen Nerdig said in his God Pause devotional this week: *“Matthew understands us. Jesus called the disciples and was with them through terror and triumph. Teaching, healing, miracles, confrontation, persecution, death, and resurrection—the disciples experienced it all. How could they help but worship Jesus? But even as they worshipped Jesus, some of them doubted—like all of us at times. The Holy Spirit’s work is cut out. It is a daily chore to call us one more time, gather us together for the sake of our faith, enlighten us yet again, and make us holy so we can wholly trust God.*

So this week - Go; and as you are going; trust God - the Creator, trust Jesus - the Redeemer, trust the Holy Spirit - the Comforter; and while you are going and trusting also be in relationship with them and with others, all others.

Amen