

TRINITY – REV'D CHRISTINE BARREN - SUNDAY 18TH JUNE 2008.
Readings: Exodus 34:1–8, 2 Cor 13:11–13, Matt. 28:16-20

"In the name of God , Father, Son and Holy Spirit or is It?

"In the Name of God - Creator, Redeemer and Sanctifier or perhaps

"In the name of God - Life giver, Pain Bearer, Love Maker?

or as we heard today

" In the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit"

and if we have seen "Four Weddings and a Funeral" we might remember

"In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy "Goat" !!!!

This is only the beginning because there are almost as many possibilities of a closing blessing.

This morning we heard the final words of the second letter that Paul wrote to the church in Corinth

"The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with all of you"

My footnotes indicate that *Communion of the Holy Spirit* could also be translated as *"the sharing in the Holy Spirit"*

None of the other letters of Paul end with a full Trinitarian blessing - most just end with

"The grace of the Lord Jesus be with you" or some variation of that.

There is no doubt a major exploration might be made about the historical reasons for this, remembering that Paul's letters are probably the earliest Christian scriptures. However that is for another day – indeed for a bible study rather than in our Sunday worship together.

What does interest me is the fact that from as early as 55 C.E this Trinitarian blessing was being used. This tradition continued as Matthew wrote his Gospel – probably in about 70 C.E.

So on this Trinity Sunday it seems a reasonable idea to explore a little these words that we say almost without thinking when we come together as Christian community.

What do we actually understand we are saying ?

I could just remind you that there are shelves upon shelves of books in theological libraries around the world trying to explain it. I could say to you that it is just simply beyond our comprehension. However before I do that, let me show you a simple mobile that could have been made by a 5 year old child.

A number of years ago on another Trinity Sunday I was involved in a special Sunday school activity morning. We made mobiles like these and I discovered that the children had no trouble in understanding the Trinity. Can you see that although the three parts are different they fit together to form a circle – the ancient symbol for God? They each have something that links them to each other and yet they are also very different in shape and colour.

I may well be missing some crucial bit of the theology but it works for me!

So having set the scene there remains a much more important thing about which to speak. How important is it to us that we worship the God who is "Three In One"?

Having just celebrated the great festivals of Easter and Pentecost it is timely that the celebration of the Trinity is immediately afterwards. We are reminded that God is the creator of all that is, that this God chose to take on our humanity, to live a truly human life, to suffer and to die.

And then last Sunday we experienced the joy and the challenge of God revealed as Spirit - promised by Christ after his resurrection - as the intimate breath of God breathed on each one of us but also as the power of fire and wind challenging us as Christian community to go out and tell and be the Good News to all the world. Today we are reminded in the gospel we can only do this "in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit."

For me, the experiencing each year of the stories of Easter and Pentecost confirm why I worship the Trinitarian God. I find a wonderful understanding of God who is both creator and intimate lover; the one who calls me to worship, God revealed in the beauty and grandeur of all creation and yet who is also close to me as I travel my human journey and am privileged to share the journey of others.

This God is the fire in my being and the love in my heart as I go about my daily life. As so often happens for me, sometimes it is best said in words and music. It may be the simplicity of a children's chant

*"Our heavenly Father is one God and Jesus is his Son.
The Holy Spirit is God's power, and all are Three in One*

or the familiar words of "Holy, Holy Holy" that speak of the transcendence of God. There is no doubt that words and music together can powerfully evoke the Trinity. (Many of you may be sad that we are not singing the epic St Patrick's Breastplate this morning)

So I would encourage you to explore the words of the last song we will sing this morning
T/S 631

*Father, Lord of all creation,
Ground of being, life and love;
Height and depth beyond description
Only life in you can prove;
You are mortal life's dependence;
Thought, speech, sight are ours by grace;
Yours is every hour's existence,
Sovereign Lord of time and space.*

*Jesus Christ, the Man for others,
We, your people make our prayer;
Let us love as sisters, brothers,
All whose burdens we can share.
Where your name binds us together
You, Lord Christ, will surely be;
Where no selfishness can sever
There your love we all may see.*

*Holy Spirit, rushing burning,
Wind and flame of Pentecost,
Fill our hearts afresh with yearning
to regain what we have lost.
May your love unite our action,
nevermore to speak alone;
God in us abolish faction,
And through us your love make known*

During communion I would also ask you to quietly join in the singing of T/S 466

*"Peace with the Father, peace with Christ, his Son,
peace with the Spirit, keep us ever one.*

*Love of the Father, love of Christ his Son,
love of the Spirit, make all Christians one.*

*Sin has divided those whom Christ made one;
Father, forgive us through your loving Son.*

*Send forth your Spirit, Father, from above
on us, your children, one with Christ in love.*

*Christians forgive each other from your heart;
Christ be among us nevermore to part.*

All these challenge us to make a reality of our belief in a Trinitarian God.

Imagine a world transformed by God. Imagine a world transformed by an understanding of the gift of the intimate love of God revealed in Christ.

Imagine a world transformed by the fire and passion of Christian communities touched by the power of the Holy Spirit.

In the name of God; Life giver, Pain bearer, Love Maker - Amen