

Sermon preached by the Reverend Margie Baker
St. John's Episcopal Church, West Hartford, CT
Trinity Sunday, Year C
June 16, 2019

I am so very excited to be here with you today. This is my first Sunday at St. John's! I graduated *exactly* one month ago today, and I was ordained to the diaconate last week. I look forward to getting to know you and helping the people of St. John's do God's work in this corner of the world.

I will admit, however, that I am *nervous*. You see, this is Trinity Sunday, and I face a dilemma: preaching on the Trinity is difficult, but I do not want to skip the subject entirely, because then you might think that I don't like a challenge. First impressions matter! It's hard to preach on the Trinity because it is simultaneously foundational to our Christian faith and, frankly, hard to get one's head around. To say that we believe in the Trinity is to embrace Threeness and Oneness at the same time. Trinity of Persons and Unity of Being; God is one- unity itself, perfect, whole, with no divisions; and yet, God is three persons, each of whom is *fully* God. It's a lot to unpack.

If your head is swimming, or you're on the verge of checking out because this sounds like a theological dive down the rabbit hole, no need to fear! I will not attempt a deep, theologically intricate, historical portrait of the Doctrine of the Trinity. If I'm completely honest, I don't think there's much benefit to such a sermon, because that's not where the Trinity speaks to me the most. In fact, we aren't supposed to understand the Trinity, at least not fully. God is bigger than our understanding, so the Trinity is beyond our full comprehension as well. We glimpse only in part. The Trinity is a mystery. To call the Trinity a mystery means that its truths are partially revealed, while more remains hidden. Just like God. We know a little about God, through what has been revealed in Scripture, through Jesus, and through how God acts in our own lives, but we do not, cannot, see God fully. To call

the Trinity a mystery honors our desire to understand and names our inability to do so. We can see, but only in part. God transcends what we can know, and beyond that point we live by faith. If we want all of the answers right now, the Trinity is frustrating. But if we can sit with the mystery, then we might find rest, and peace, and wonder.

The Trinity helps me to understand how God who is bigger, greater, deeper, wider, wilder than anything we can imagine loves us and works within us and among us to bring us, little by little, closer to the heart of God. God is so vast, and yet intimately present in our lives, in mine and yours. God is present here, right now. God animates us and gives us hope. How can God be so big and also be here, now, with us? How can God, who created everything, be the same God who speaks in a still, small voice in my heart? Who animated the prophets and prompted them to do Holy Work, who *still* fills people with the Holy Spirit, inviting and inciting them to speak truth to power, to love their neighbors no matter what, to share the Good News in the face of apathy, terror, and other evils?

So I sit with the seeming paradox, of a great big unchanging God who also dwells within me and understands my little human life and speaks to people today. And in that paradox, which I do not comprehend fully, I see the Trinity. God is the Father, the creator, and also the Son, Emmanuel, God with us, and also the Holy Spirit, God working within us and among us to equip us for the work of the Kingdom. One way I live with and meditate on this is to look for Father, Son, and Holy Spirit at work together. Where are the moments in our faith story, or in our own lives, where the Trinity is revealed? The first creation story is one of those places for me. It begins with God's Spirit hovering over the formless void, and then God speaking light into being. The Word of God- Christ, divine Wisdom- carried on the breath of God- the Spirit. Christ reveals God in the world, the Spirit animates the world, carries the power of God into the world. The Genesis story tells me that from the very beginning, God who is immense and vast and timeless has revealed God's self and breathed life into the Creation.

This is my go-to musing when I'm in nature, when I'm running or walking the dog early in the morning or just drinking coffee outside. The idea of God can feel so big, so abstract, even distant, but creation is ongoing and hands-on. Every day is a new creation, so every day God creates anew. Every day God the Father speaks new life into being, the Word of God carried on the breath of God. And every day God sees it and calls it Good. Creation is an ongoing dance of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

It is not just in creation, in beginnings and new life, that I glimpse the Trinity. It shapes how I understand the pain of life too. Jesus, fully divine and fully human, *suffers*. Jesus is God, part and parcel of the Holy Trinity. And he experiences the full spectrum of our human lives, a life harder than most of us can imagine. Jesus is born into an occupied land and has to flee for his life. He encounters people who suffer, people who grieve, and he heals them. He calls out the powers that be, both religious and political, and dies a criminal's death on a tree. This means that every sort of suffering is known, really known, by God. The God who created the universe and the animals and you and me- that same God has experienced what it is to lose, to hurt, to be abandoned, even to die. There is nothing that can happen to us that is beyond the realm of God's love. There is nothing that we can do that can put us outside of God's light.

When I am grieving, when I am suffering, it helps me to know that God understands that suffering too. And when the grief and the suffering make me angry, or numb, I find hope in the fact that the Holy Spirit is still moving, brooding over the waters of my soul, ready to make something new.

So there you have it: a Trinity Sunday sermon that makes no attempt to explain the Trinity but instead invites you to sit with the mystery. Contemplate where you can see God the Creator, Son, and Holy Spirit at work in the stories of our faith. Reflect on the many ways God is present in your own life. And most of all, trust that not being sure isn't a failure of faith, imagination, or intellect. No, we simply *do not* get to know it all. Paul says as much in his first letter to the

Corinthians: “ For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then we will see face to face. Now I know only in part; then I will know fully, even as I have been fully known.” Our job is to live our lives in God, wondering and questioning and trying to understand, while always knowing that we are being led slowly into full knowledge of God.