



SERMONS THAT WORK

Trinity Sunday (B)

You Will See Yourself

RCL: Isaiah 6:1-8; Psalm 29 or Canticle 13 (or Canticle 2); Romans 8:12-17; John 3:1-17

One of the challenges to proclamation on Trinity Sunday is that there are no Biblical passages that discuss the peculiar Christian understanding of God as three persons. The word in the creed is *personas*, like the mask Greek actors wear to play different characters. It is always the same person behind the three personas! Other monotheists are utterly baffled by bold assertions in creeds and in doctrinal theses of just how the One God of the Abrahamic religions can appear to be three persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and still be only one God. Such assertions about the Trinity emerge from our reflection upon scripture but are not found explicitly in scripture *per se*.

Our readings for this day, for instance, from Psalm 29 and Isaiah illustrate the compelling power of God's voice, able both to create and destroy creation all at once, and able to convince the most unsuspecting of us to assent, indeed, proclaim with vigor, "Here I am, send me!" The voice can call us to return to the myriad problems of *terra firma* and risk being a prophet, pointing out all the ways in which we, as God's people, just have lost our way and need to, at least, reform our behavior, if not full-out repent and begin again. People, understandably, do not like to hear the prophetic voice, which explains why Jonah tried to get as far away from Nineveh as possible.

In Romans, Paul leads us into more mystical territory with his assertion that, like Jesus, we can now call God by the more familiar name, *Abba*, Father, suggesting that, although we suffer with Christ, we also will share in his glory. In John, Nicodemus tries mightily to ask straightforward questions of Jesus, only to get an enigmatic response about wind and being born from above, which he mistakes for being born again. Nick leaves shaking his head and muttering, "How can these things be?"

Instead of trying to squeeze something useful about the Trinity out of scripture – which, quite honestly, doesn't have much to say about it – it may be better to turn to those Christians throughout the ages we call saints and mystics, those who may have yielded more insight about God than the average lectionary reading. Take, for instance, Julian of Norwich, a woman in the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries who lived in a hut, or cell, attached to the outer wall of St. Julian's Church in Norwich. During her lifetime, the city suffered the effects of the Black Plague, the Peasant's Revolt, and the suppression of the Lollards.

Julian, while sure she was dying, received a series of visions or “showings” and wrote them down in the first book ever written in English by a woman: *Revelations of Divine Love*.

A popular summary of her showings has been reduced to the popular saying: “*All shall be well, all shall be well, all manner of thing shall be well.*” Yet, a look into the Thirty-First Chapter of the Long Text of her “showings” may provide us with a bit more insight into the nature of the Holy Trinity and Divine Love; she would spend the rest of her life sharing these insights with those who came to the window of her cell seeking spiritual guidance. The text begins:

“And our good Lord answered to all the questions and doubts which I could raise, saying most comfortingly: I may make all things well, and I can make all things well, and I shall make all things well, and I will make all things well; and you will see yourself that every kind of thing will be well. When he says, ‘I may’, I understand this to apply to the Father; and when he says ‘I can’, I understand it for the Son; and when he says, ‘I will’, I understand it for the Holy spirit; and when he says, ‘I shall’, I understand it for the unity of the blessed Trinity, three persons and one truth; and when he says, ‘You will see yourself’, I understand it for the union of all men who will be saved in the blessed Trinity. And in these five words God wishes us to be enclosed in rest and peace.”¹

She refers to “these five words” which are: I may, I can, I will, I shall, you will. With these five words, we learn that God’s wish for us is to be “enclosed” in rest and peace! God wants to surround us with Divine Love, and each *persona* of the Holy Trinity is forever and constantly involved in this enclosing or surrounding us with Love, which in most of the Bible is described by the Hebrew word, *hesed*. *Hesed* is perhaps best understood as an “act of good faith” rather than a feeling. It is a quality that humans are to share with God: that generous ability to put the interests of another weaker party before one’s own, most especially the needs of the poor, widows, orphans, and strangers from other countries who are sojourning in the land. That is, God’s Divine Love, as revealed to Julian, is acting with love on behalf of others just as God acts with love on our behalf.

Since scripture says we are made in God’s image, then we are to be those people who exemplify *hesed*, acts of faith and love toward others in the same way that God desires to enclose us – surround us – with God’s own Divine Love, rest, and peace. This suggests that the five words are, in the end, meant for us. We might think of it as the doctrine of the Little Engine That Could. That is, to be made in God’s image is to wake up each morning and say the five words: I may, I can, I will, I shall, you will see yourself. Then we are to go about our days, generously putting the interests of others ahead of our own. We will then be enclosed and surrounded by God’s Divine Love in rest and peace as we share that Divine Love with others.

In this receiving and giving of God’s Divine Love, we discover that all shall be well, all shall be well, all manner of thing shall be well; we find ourselves enclosed in rest and peace.

¹ Julian of Norwich: Showings (Translated by Edmund College, James Walsh, Paulist Press, New York: 1978) p. 229.

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When we say, “I may, I can, I will, I shall, you will see yourself” once a day, how Divine it will be to know, to really know, that the Divine Love of God in Father, Son, and Holy Spirit means to enclose us and surround us every day until that time when we will return to the household of God’s Divine Love from whence we come. That day, we will all become one with the One in whose image we are created. Perhaps this is what “You will see yourself” really means: we will see who we really are and who we are created to be. We will see that we are those people meant to accept and share generously with others the Divine Love that those like Julian, Ignatius, Isaiah, Paul, and Jesus have tried so hard to describe and to live through acts of faith themselves. Surely such knowledge of ourselves deserves at least one day every year to remember who we are and to see ourselves as God sees us – those people made in the image of God’s own Divine Love who may, who can, who will, and who shall share that Love with others. All others. Especially those in need. For it is when we do this that we see ourselves as we really are: God’s Beloved. Amen.

***The Rev. Kirk Alan Kubicek** is currently Priest in Charge at Christ Church, Rock Spring Parish, Forest Hill, Md. Christ Church is a Small but Mighty parish, and together we are rediscovering what our Lord has in store for our future. He has spent over 35 years in Parish Ministry in all shapes and size parishes, and for 15 years worked with The Episcopal Church Office of Stewardship and TENS. He often uses storytelling, music, and guitar in proclaiming the Good News. Married with three adult children and one grandson, Kirk also plays drums in On The Bus, a DC Metro Area Grateful Dead tribute band. All shall be well, all shall be well, all manner of thing shall be well!*