

I begin with a quote...

'This is Trinity Sunday, but [people who are suffering], probably do not care. Does it really matter to them that God is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit? They just want to know that God is God and that God somehow knows who they are, where they are... and what they need.'

That is a quote from a little known American theologian called Steven Eason, it caught my eye and I think it captures the public mood rather well.

This is indeed Trinity Sunday. Today we remember in particular, that God is Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

The doctrine of the Trinity, the nature of one God in three persons is a theology which is hotly contested. It is a theology which has grown over time and is not played out in the bible as a complete theological work in itself. Talking about the trinity, is a tight rope walk, because it is talking about the very nature of God. An attempt to comprehend the incomprehensible. At the heart of discerning the nature of the trinity and the nature of God, is the question "How does God work? How does God function in our lives?"

But to put it bluntly, at this time in our world, when we ask about the doctrine of the trinity, the nitty gritty of how God works, who does care? Those who have lost loved ones in Manchester, Baghdad, London, Manilam or Tehran, what does the doctrine of the Trinity offer to them. At a time when we turn on the news without knowing what to expect, a time when the boundaries of what it means to live in a safe and secure society is being pushed to its limits, what can a theology of understanding God as three persons offer? Why do we need to go beyond knowing that "that God is God and that God knows who we are, how we are... and what we need" More on that later.

Pause

Now as much as a preacher can try to sound relevant, try to keep up with the times, try to speak into a situation being a witness to Christ, if you listen

hard enough, all preachers only have one good sermon in them. And Sunday by Sunday we express ourselves in subtly different ways. But at the end of the day the gospel is utterly simple within its complexity and all preachers have a central gospel which they proclaim. And mine more often than not tries to circulate around a verse from of John's Gospel

“God is love, and those who live in love, live in God and God lives in them.”

No matter how much we explore God, no matter how much we try to pin God down to three persons and comprehend the incomprehensible, we are saturated with the knowledge that God is Love. More than that we need not know.

However we are a church that says that we believe, in one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Three persons as one substance. So what does the trinity have to offer?

When my wife and I got married, we were lucky enough to be married by the Rev'd Professor Mark Chapman, professor in the History of Modern Theology at Oxford University. During the sermon Mark talked about God as trinity and much to the consternation of many of my unchurched friends at the wedding, Mark talked about perichoresis.

Now Perichoresis is a Greek compound word. Within the word Perichoresis we find two words, the words 'peri' which is where we get the word, perimeter which we can interpret to mean round or circle and the other word Choresis which is where we get choreography, to dance.

In this word perichoresis we find a circle dance, and it is used by the Eastern orthodox tradition to describe and explain the trinity and how the Father, Son and Holy Spirit work together.

God dances and to quote the sermon preached at the marriage of my wife and I, directly Mark said this “God's whole life is a dance of love – love flows from God and is received by God. And that means that God is a God who always wants to dance in step with us... love flows between the

Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and that same love flows out into the world and flows back to God through our worship. God is a kind of dance where the three persons move together in perfect synchronization. What that means is that in the very heart of God there is a relationship like the relationship between dancers – different dancers, but one dance.”

That is the dance of love. If we were a church that just says, I believe in God and not build on that with Father, Son and Holy Spirit there would be no dance. We would have what Aristotle proposed of God, as the unmoved mover. A God who sits and caused things into being and stops there. And yet we believe in God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. This trinity which dances with itself and with us, that causes, sustains and invites us to love and to dance.

So, what does Trinity Sunday have to offer? What does hundreds of years of theology about God and picking at the workings of the divine offer us? It reminds us, that at the heart of God is a God that moves, that dances that keeps up with us in this baffling world. In this world, where we know not what is coming around the corner, what atrocity we can expect to see next, the Church says we believe in God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, who flows through this world who pours out love, and it is up to us to flow it back to God and to ease its path throughout the world.

On Tuesday at 11 o'clock parts of the United Kingdom fell silent for a moment, as we remembered those who were killed in London. In Devizes, we stood outside the Corn Exchange as a group united, not by faith, not by politics not even by sadness or grief, but by love. In the midst of such times of terror we will always be able to see glimpses of love. The love of God invites us to join in the dance of God, the dance of Love. And it is up to us, to join in this dance of love, and to make it visible throughout the world.

And I think I will leave you with a final quote from Mark Chapman:

“The divine dance in which we are sharing today is a dance of hope: it gives energy and life to each of us as God’s love floods into our lives, sustaining, recreating and renewing.”

God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, is love, and those who live in love live in God,
and God lives in them.