

Trinity Sunday
16 June 2019

Proverbs 8: 1-4,22-31

Psalm 8

Romans 5: 1-5

John 16: 12-15

Love, Love, Love

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In the name of the One who made us, the One who loves us, and the One who walks with us. Amen.

We see so much evil around us,
so much harm done,
that we think it impossible
that there is any good in this world.

We look at this in sorrow
and mourn so
that we cannot see God as we should.

This is because we use our reason
so blindly, so unfully
and so simplemindedly
that we are unable to know
the marvelous wisdom, capability
and goodness
of the joyful Trinity.

Just as the joyful Trinity
created all things
out of nothing,
so also this same blessed Trinity
will make well
all that is not well.

Julian of Norwich¹

Those are the words of the 14th C. mystic, Julian of Norwich. We know very little about her beyond the writings in her book, *Revelations of Divine Love*, except that

¹ Doyle, Brendan. *Meditations with Julian of Norwich*. Santa Fe, NM: Bear & Company, Inc, 1983: 56.

people sought her out for spiritual advice during a time when they were suffering from plague, famine, and poverty.²

Sometimes we forget that we are neither the first or the only people to experience fear and anxiety about the state of the world we live in. Julian's writings are an antidote to those feelings, full of hope and trust in God's goodness. "God is everything which is good," she writes. "...and the goodness which everything has is God."³

We are not able to comprehend the fullness of God by human reason, Julian notes, and our words fail to fully describe God. But we do have words for our experience of God and one of those words is Trinity. If you really boil it down, Trinity means that God is love. Trinity means that God, who is three in One and One in three, is a community of love within God's own self; that the very nature of God is love. Or, as our Presiding Bishop, Michael Curry, puts it, "...we don't have three gods; we have one God. We just know this one God in multiple, magnificent ways. We've got ourselves a many-splendored God."⁴

Indeed. A God who spoke sun, and moon, and stars into being; who made the earth and all that is in it; a God who called each and every one of us into being out of that love, making us in his own image. We have a God who so loved the world that he sent his only Son - not to condemn the world but to save it - by offering himself up, a perfect sacrifice of self-giving love; a God who has not left us on our own, but has given us the gift of the Holy Spirit to remind us of that love and to keep us within its embrace.

"I saw that he is to us everything which is good and comforting for our help," Julian wrote. "He is our clothing, who wraps and enfolds us for love, embraces us and shelters us, surrounds us for his love, which is so tender that he many never desert us. And so in this sight I saw that he is everything which is good, ..." ⁵

A couple of years ago, my daughter gave me the gift of a DNA test from Ancestry.com. I was excited to take a deeper look into my heritage for a number of reasons, but let's face it, in the end these explorations of family history - of whatever sort - are always rooted in some question around identity, belonging, and purpose. We want to know something more about who we are and where we came from and what that might mean for us.

Now I'm not knocking these kinds of explorations. I've so enjoyed learning more about when and where my people came from and why. I've learned something more about why they made those long and very difficult journeys and, in the process, I've

² <http://juliancentre.org/about/about-julian-of-norwich.html>

³ Doyle, Brendan. op. cit.: 32.

⁴ Curry, Michael. *The Power of Love*. New York, NY. Avery, 2018: 49.

⁵ Payne, Richard J., editor in chief. *The Classics of Western Spirituality: Julian of Norwich, Showings*. Mahwah, New Jersey: Paulist Press, Inc., 1978: 183.

learned something more about who I am. But that's not really the most important question any of us needs to ask and answer. It's not so much "who am I", but "whose am I"?

To whom do I belong? Before I belong to my family, to those Norwegian, Scottish and French Canadian ancestors, I belong to God. You belong to God. We belong to God. As St. Paul writes so beautifully, "In him we live and move and have our being". (Acts 17:28)

And what does that mean for us? Again Paul's words express it beautifully. "What then are we to say about these things? If God is for us, who is against us?...Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will hardship, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril or sword?...No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Romans 8: 31; 35; 37-39)

We were created by the love that is One in Three. We are saved by the love of the Son for the Father and the Father for the Son. We share in that love and are invited to abide in the peace and the joy of that love by the Son, through the power of the Holy Spirit, who is that animating, life-giving, crazy for humankind and for the world, love.

Or, as Bishop Curry says, "God is love. The reason we are here, the reason there is a world, is because God is love. We have life because of love."⁶

That love calls for a response from us. We are free to choose. We can deny it. We can ignore it. Or we can give in to it, responding first with awe and wonder as the psalmist does, and then, by taking up the task that Jesus has given us of loving one another. And, "[T]he key to following Jesus," Bishop Curry says, "the key to being his disciples, the key to life is love. It's always love."

Now some of you may be thinking "Wow, Nancy. You are soooo naive. This world is a mess. Human beings are a disaster and all you got is " love, love, love. All you need is love."⁷ Yeah, yeah, yeah."

But I'm not talking about love as a feeling. Feelings are important, but they are fleeting, frequently unreliable, and constantly changing. The love I'm talking about is a choice we make about how we're going to be in the world, about how we see the world and the rest of God's children with whom we share that world. That kind of love is powerful when it's unleashed.

⁶ Curry, Michael. op. cit.: 50.

⁷ Lennon, John and McCartney, Paul. *All You Need is Love*. The Beatles. June 1967.

That kind of love sees, welcomes, and makes room for others because it sees in the other the image of God and recognizes God's own beloved child. That kind of love practices patience and kindness, regardless of how it feels at any given moment. It forgives and asks for forgiveness. That kind of love can heal all sorts of wounds, bringing comfort where there is fear and suffering, inspiring and bringing people together when they're divided. That kind of love brings hope and new life. It strives for justice and peace among all people because it sees the world as God sees it, and because, as someone once said, justice is what love looks like in public.

We were made for that kind of love. You might say it's in our DNA. It's part of our family story, passed on to us by our ancestors in faith. Is it easy? Heck no! But it is possible. Often enough to make a real difference. One choice at a time. One day at a time, we can choose to live out that kind of love with God's help, because, as Paul reminds us, "God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us." (Romans 5: 5b)

So maybe you'll leave church this morning with a less than perfect understanding of the doctrine of the Trinity. Maybe you won't be able to explain it to your friends. I think that's OK if you leave with a renewed sense of awe and wonder before the great mystery that is our God. Maybe it's OK that we don't fully understand the mystery if we simply come to understand that our many splendored God is both the source of our life and the thing that gives your life and my life and all the life that surrounds us this morning, meaning and purpose; that it is God's Trinitarian nature that connects God to us and us to God and to each other.

And so we pray -

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with us all evermore, (2 Corinthians 13:14) helping us to carry the life-giving love that made us, the self-giving love that saved us, and the eternal love that continues to embrace us, into a world that needs love, sweet love right now - and no, not just for some, but for everyone.⁸ Amen.

⁸ Bacharach, Burt and David, Hal. *What the World Needs Now*. Recorded by Jackie DeShannon, 15 April 1965. Imperial.