



Deering Community Church

Pastor: Barbara Lockett Currie

Go, Do, and Talk

Trinity Sunday 2011

Scripture: 2 Corinthians 13:11-13, Matthew 28:16-20

Happy Trinity Sunday!! In the life of the Church we have special Sundays for the purpose of remembering certain historic events in the life of Christ—last week was Pentecost and of course the most memorable ones are Christmas and Easter. Most Sundays we focus on the life and teachings of Jesus. It is only on Trinity Sunday that we focus instead on a doctrine of the Church. The doctrine of the Trinity was first set forth at the Nicea Council, organized by the Roman Emperor Constantine in 325, many years after the Bible was written. In the Bible itself the word trinity does not appear; however, in the second letter to the Corinthians Paul closes with what sounds very trinitarian: “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.” Also in today’s Gospel, Jesus tells his followers to “Go—in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.”

Not all Christians accept the concept of the Trinity; I have no problem with it--it makes good sense to me. As simply as I can put it, the Trinity says that there is only one God, but that there are 3 persons in this one God, usually referred to as the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. All three of these persons are of the same substance and all three are one. Mathematically we are saying $1+1+1=1$ (not 3)—not very logical. This reminds me of a joke I read: A teacher was using the scientific method to try to teach a 5th grade class about evolution and the nonexistence of God. She asked Tommy if he could see the tree outside. Tommy says yes. She goes on asking him if he can see things like the grass, the flowers, and the sky. Then she asks if he could see God. He answers “No” and the teacher



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says, “That’s my point. We can’t see God because he isn’t there. He doesn’t exist.” A girl in the class asked if she could ask the boy some questions and the teacher agreed. So the girl asks Tommy the same questions: Can you see the sky, the tree, etc. And then she asks him, “Do you see the teacher?” Tommy says Yes. “Can you see the teacher’s brain?” Tommy says No, and the girl replies, “Then according to what we were taught today in school, she must not have one!”

Theologian Elizabeth Johnson says that the doctrine of the Trinity developed as the early Christians experienced God in a threefold way as beyond them, with them, and within them or in other words: utterly transcendent, historically present in Jesus, and with them as a Spirit individually and in the community. I would like to share with you and have you reflect on various names that have been used for the Trinity besides the traditional Father, Son, and Holy Ghost or Spirit. See if any of these names are more useful and meaningful for you. a very common one is Creator, Redeemer, Sustainer; another one using Biblical words is Abba, Servant, Paraclete. Herbert Muhlen calls this divine reality the I, Thou, and We of love. Letty Russell’s words are: Creator, Liberator, and Advocate. An Indian, Raimundo Panikkar, keeping in mind the threefold experience at the heart of Hindu as well as Christian faith formulates it this way: Source, being, and return to being, which relates to God is above all, through all, and in all. St. Augustine spent much time trying to explain the Trinity. He came up with 20 different attempts, the most famous being Lover, Beloved, and Love--God is the Lover, Jesus the Beloved as he was called at his baptism, and the Holy Spirit is Love--the love between us and God as well as our love for one another. I think I like this one the best. What about you? Does any one want to share?



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Do you think it is possible to define God? No matter how much we think we know about God, there is always something more to God than we can comprehend. There is always something more just beyond what we think we know and understand. God is always a wonderful, indefinable Mystery, One who leaves us in wonder and awe. After the sermon we are going to sing Brian Wren's fairly new hymn, "Bring Many Names". I hope that will supplement my words in helping us relate to the Trinity and beyond.

For the rest of this message I want to focus on what many call the Great Commission, Jesus' final words to his disciples in Matthew, included on this Trinity Sunday because of the words Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Let me read again verses 19 and 20: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the son, and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember I am with you always, to the end of time."

How do you react to these words? Are these words directed to you? Is it something that you do or even would think of doing? David Lose, one of the ministers that I read regularly when researching for sermons, says that most Christians feel unable to follow these final words of Jesus, and he blames a lot of it on the ministers who do not teach how to talk about their faith. He suggests that we start by acknowledging that most of us don't have the foggiest idea of what it would look like in everyday life to take these parting words of Jesus seriously. Basically, I believe that we need to show our faith by both how we treat each other and the world, plus we need to use words to talk about our faith. Please see the next newsletter where I explore this theme further.



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This congregation is amazing when it comes to its ability to do the first part of the task, show faith by action both individually and informally as well as through our mission projects such as Feed a Teen, Food Pantry, and in even in doing things such as our annual Chicken BBQ, free to the community. Most of you agree with St. Francis' saying, "Go out and preach the gospel and when necessary use words". These are action oriented words. These words come from Jesus and direct us to show our love and care by both words and actions.

One day St. Francis said he was going out on a preaching mission and invited a novice to go along. "On their way, they passed an injured man and Francis promptly stopped, saw to the poor fellow's needs and arranged medical care for him. They went on and soon passed a homeless man who was near starvation. Again, Francis stopped his journey and ministered to the hungry, homeless man. So it went, through the day: people in need, Francis lovingly caring for them as best he could until the sun was low in the sky. He told his novice friend it was time for them to return, now, to the monastery for evening prayers. But the young man said, 'Father, you said we were coming to town to preach to the people.' Francis smiled. Then he said, 'My friend, that's what we've been doing all day.'"¹ This is wonderful, faithful evangelism, ministering to people in their need, not worrying about numerical growth, just sharing God's love in a concrete fashion. Yet there are times when we need to use words. Even St. Francis would admit to that, "when necessary use words."

Jesus tells us to "Go". The word Apostle means one that is sent. God is calling you (name some names) to go out with compassion and tender care in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The particular way and the particular



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people we are being called to serve vary. There's one thing that I'm sure of and that is we are not called to just sit still, but to be on the move as Jesus and his apostles were, and to be open to those that we meet along the way.

This final commandment of Jesus is not an easy thing to do. No one can make anyone follow Jesus. All we can do is to share our lives and our words, words that we have learned from Jesus. I see a top priority of my time here with you is to inspire, teach, and motivate you to follow Jesus by sharing, by going out to love and serve. The 30 or 40 people active in this congregation may not wipe out world poverty or achieve world peace; however, let's start where we can: take someone standing with a sign at Shaw's entrance to have a burger at McDonalds, go to visit a the Woman's Prison, make a quilt for a hospice patient, AND talk to a friend or neighbor about this church and invite them to join us. The good news for us as we go forth is Jesus' promise to be with us to the end. Amen and Amen

¹ E. Carver McGriff, "Relationship Evangelism, Times of Refreshing", CSS Publishing Company