

Almost a Trinity sermon but really another one on Pentecost. (2010)

Home Group Notes

Okay, you're on your own now till September when we'll be looking at 1 Timothy and 1 Samuel 1-7.

Worship: Psalm 8

Welcome & Word

1. What would you say to 7-8yr old: Where was God standing when He made the world?
2. How do you know God is a boy not a girl!
3. Read John 16.12-15
4. I didn't refer at all to the other reading (Romans 5.1-5), how does it help us understand The Trinity or The Holy Spirit?
5. How does the Holy Spirit guide us? How can I be open to His promptings – does anyone have an example of God guiding?
6. How does God speak? How can I learn to listen?

Works:

Pray for the work of the Holy Spirit at work in you, in Us

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I've been **looking** forward to this sermon for a long time. I **promised** myself that I was going to leave you with **one last sermon** and the idea was that it was going to give you such food for thought that it would last you nicely through the summer.

My cunning plan was to talk about the **Trinity**, to talk about how a lot of the language we use for the Trinity – ice / water / steam, 3 leaf clover, father husband son, 3 sides of 1 triangle, - all that stuff, all it really does is show how one thing can sometimes be three.

It's **useful up to a point** because it helps us with our language but that's as far as it goes – take it any further and it starts to turn all wrong and heretical and unhelpful. One year I gave you an **audible** solution (notes of a chord in the same key?) and maybe I will remind you of that next year.

This year what I wanted to **show off** to you was a useful idea that came from a preacher called Rob Bell. He nicked the idea from someone else who wrote a book called **Flatlanders** and I tried explaining this to Miss Read's Badger Class - School year 3 – so that's for children aged about 8.

I was asked a question about **where God was** when He made the world – what was He standing on? There was another question to do with **who made God?**

Part of my answer was this – imagine that you **live like a pencil dot** on a flat piece of paper. You can move anywhere on the piece of paper but you can't go up or down. Now imagine a **ball** falling **through** the paper

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at **first all you see is a dot** but then the dot becomes a circle and the circle gets bigger and bigger until finally it starts to get smaller and smaller and then it's just a dot and disappears.

You turn to your friend and say **Wow** what was that? and he says it was an anomaly, just a line of dots. And you say No I think it was something bigger than that I think it was a Ball. And your friend says What's a

ball and you say I don't know it's a word I just made up to connect all those things that you think are anomalies because maybe it's One thing.

Now, what I **wanted** to do was to develop this profound line of thinking because the Trinity is a jolly **humbling** Doctrine.

When the Bishops of first tried to put together a creed they put down **what they did know** and they didn't try to solve it.

They said We believe in God the father, in the Son, in the Holy Spirit and they **didn't try and solve it**.

Others were keen to say Let's just have one God.

Jesus can be God's servant but the more they talked about it the more they realised that whilst it might make it easier on the brain, it **wouldn't make it easier on the soul** – if Jesus isn't God then our sins aren't forgiven and we're in as big a pickle as ever.

And this is the sort of thing I wanted to unpack. The Trinity is a humbling doctrine that takes the strong and bold and **confident** among us who like to say We know about God and the Trinity says There's so much more to God – its like saying you **know an ocean** when all you have done is walk along the shore (Augustine).

Even us professional theologians have to admit that all we have done is a bit **snorkelling**. It's a marvellously humbling doctrine.

It's good for those of you who like your beliefs to be all tidy and clear, you read the bible and you choose to believe this and **choose to not believe** that – because of course you are rational and clever - and the Trinity won't let you. So it is essential for you to hear at least one heavy Trinity sermon per year. But not today, sorry.

Last week I **short changed** you on Pentecost. You had a mediocre exposition of Acts 26. So this week I want to come **back to the Holy Spirit** but as you'll see we won't be very far away from the Trinity.

Last week I talked about the **affect** of Pentecost on Paul – how the Holy Spirit gave Paul **Courage** and is needed in **Conversion** and then in what we do with our lives, how we join ourselves to **Community**.

This week we get to see in more detail what the Holy Spirit wants to do with us.

Jesus says I have much **more to say to you** more than you can now bear – that's good because it means that there is More! There's more to learn and discover about life and God.

“But **when he**” – I like that **it's a When not an If**, not an If you're good enough or found worthy but a When. It's a solid reliable promise that doesn't depend on you it depends on God. Jesus didn't pick His first disciples because they were good enough, He picked them because **He believed in them**.

When He the Spirit – **how do you know God is a boy** and not a girl – so asked Mr Cobb's class? What would you say?

The main thing says I, is that God is **not an It** but a He – on the whole God reveals Himself to us in a male metaphor – the Father- but there are some female similes – *like* a mother hen. The **girls** in the class didn't seem altogether happy with this answer so I told them that the **female disciples stayed** with Jesus at the cross while all the chaps ran away, that the women were the first to meet with the risen Lord Jesus and that seemed to cheer them up a bit!

When He, The Spirit of truth comes, He guides us into all truth – so His job will be to **finish the conversation** that Jesus started.

It's a guiding into truth not a simple telling, it's not a sit down and listen to a lecture but the Holy Spirit, the **Comforter** is the one who comes along side and journeys with us.

His guidance isn't like the helpful man who says Ooh if you want to go to London, **I wouldn't start from here**. Instead he gets in the car and comes with us.

The Holy Spirit **guides** us. Well that's nice but **where** are we going?

We're **not necessarily** headed for health or wealth or safety or comfort, we're headed for the Truth – for a life that is **lived truly** and honestly to the fullest extent,

not shirking our call,
not giving our sins the time of day nor allowing them to be used as excuses for avoiding doing the right thing.

The Holy Spirit will guide us into the True life. You might not all feel too comfortable with that. The **good news** is that this is the **call to the adventure** of your life; the goodnews is that the Holy **Spirit comes with you** He doesn't just tell you where to go. The Holy Spirit guides us into all truth.

The Holy **Spirit speaks**; He will tell you what is yet to come.

I'm fond of quoting Mark **Twain** who says The problem with the Bible isn't the bits I don't understand it's the bits that I do! It's clear enough what this is saying. But there's a part of us that says that's just plain **nonsense** – God doesn't speak. And the rebuttal to that is have you tried listening? There are **enough people** in the bible who say God has spoken.

And so the question is **How** do I get to hear God? You know the obvious answers – Read the bible, pray, have a go at listening, write stuff down, listen to yourself – we're so bad at listening **to ourselves**, let alone each other – how on earth are we ever going to learn how to listen to God.

Somehow I suspect that the **answer** is going to contain the phrase **Holy Spirit** – the Holy Spirit who promises to guide us into all truth.

So the Holy Spirit guides and He speaks – this means I must **learn to listen**, learn to take a few risks.

The promise is that the Holy Spirit will **tell us what is yet** to come. And of course we read this and say This is bunkum but then perhaps that's because we **hope** the Spirit will tell us the right **Lottery** numbers to pick.

In the Old Testament when the Spirit told the prophets what was to come – it was more in a kind of **warning** – change your ways or else this will **all end in tears**.

In St John's book of **Revelation** – again it's the same, the Spirit tells John what is to happen but this is all about **hanging** in there in the midst of great difficulty and dragons or repenting before it's all too late.

I think the Holy Spirit did tell us what would happen if we were to **fail to build the Conker Room**. I think it is part of why you caught the vision and gave so **stunningly generously**.

I think the Holy Spirit is still speaking to His Church, guiding us into all truth, telling us what is to come as we can bear to hear it. And the Holy Spirit **makes known to us the things of Jesus**.

And this brings us nice and clearly into the Trinity. The Holy Spirit says – I'm only going to tell you **what I hear**. And Jesus says I'm only doing what I see my Father doing (John 5:19). So the Father the Son and the Spirit are all fabulously entwined and **now comes the glory**.

The Holy Spirit takes from what is Jesus and we heard how everything that belongs to the Son belongs to the Father – it struck me as an odd thing to say – the **Spirit takes** – takes Jesus' words, His Truths, His gifts – the gifts of the Holy Spirit are **really the gifts of Jesus** and they really belong to the **Father**. And there you were thinking that this was all about you and your gifts.

So the Holy Spirit takes things that are Jesus' and the **sheer act of making them known to you** – that moment when you realise this is **God at work**, that moment brings glory to Jesus.

It's like a chemical reaction – baking powder and vinegar and woosh bubbling over (nearly hit the ceiling!) - the gifts of God are made known to you and **bang** the result is glory, **evanescence and joy**.

So from our point of view the Holy Spirit's job is to help us, to **guide** us, **speak** to us, **make known** to us the gifts that God gives.

And from Jesus' point of view the Holy Spirit **brings back this harvest of glory**, this appreciative awe, this joy and worship that comes from us as we **live aware** of the Holy Spirit at work in us and around us.

So Trinity Sunday – a sermon about the Holy Spirit who **guides** us into Truth, who **tells** us what is to come if we will but hear, and who **makes known** to us the gifts of God and takes back the results of that reaction - the glory that we give off when we react with God at work.

You might later want to work on what you're **supposed** to do about a sermon like this – it's not full of advice - about helping old people across roads or getting **Cubs out of horses** hooves. I ought to be saying something like –

Look after each other, **go the extra mile**, forgive each other and then again some more. That's what I should be saying if I wasn't preaching a heavy trinity sermon.

So instead I will end with a prayer – lets pray –

Come Holy Spirit – **guide** us into all Truth – speak the truth to our hearts and our minds that you maybe more than a truth I know in my head but the truth that I live with my life.

Tell us Holy Spirit what we need to know, give us open ears to your whispers and promptings, give us an open heart to take the adventure that you set before us.

And as you make yourself known to us, may you enjoy all the **glory that is due** to you. Amen.