**Stowe Church June *7th*****2020**

**Trinity Sunday**

Today we celebrate Trinity Sunday. Trinity is a word that does not appear in Scripture. It was coined much later to help describe the revelation in Scripture that God is three persons yet one God. Paul in our passage today from 2 Corinthians embraces all three, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, in his final greetings to that church.

The word Trinity has attracted much debate in attempting to understand it and finding images to describe it such as a clover leaf. There is a danger in all this debate about the Trinity: it can become distant, a concept to be explored rather than a reality to be experienced.

So how can we experience the Trinity? What could congregational life be like lived in the image of the Trinity? What attributes would be evident if we were rooted in the Trinity.

I want to explore three attributes of the Trinity this morning *for* us to reflect on. I want to suggest that a Trinity shaped church is, above all, relational, love soaked and mission hearted

**Relational**

In the Trinity, we find our example for church community life together. As God the Father, God the Son, and God the Spirit relate to one another, demonstrate love for each other, and work in concert to accomplish the purpose of God in the world, we get the idea of a community that isTrinity shaped.

Peter Holmes in his book on the Trinity says

**"The church should resonate with the dynamic relationship between God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. This relationship should be a vibrant example of what human relationships can become especially in the Body of Christ** .

At the very heart of the Trinity is a communion of three, where each one is unique and irreplaceable. All three are essential to God's being as God.

But is doesn't end there

Listen to what Jesus prayed for in John Chapter 17 verses 20 - 23

20 **"My prayer is not for them alone.** I **pray also for those who will believe in me through their message,** 21 **that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are** in **me and** I **am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. *22* 1 have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one- *23*1 in them and you in me-so that they may be brought to complete unity. Then the world will know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.**

What an incredible prayer by Jesus. He prays that we will be one as He and God the Father are one, brought to complete unity. He invites us to join the communion of the Trinity

When we become Christians we are called into relationship, into a community. We are not called to walk on our own.

The relationship within the Trinity is complete; there is nothing at all between them, no barrier no matter how small. It is into this oneness we are called to live.

The Trinity is often said to be a mystery - here is our mystery: we are called from walking as one person into a relational community which is called to be one. Jesus says that such a relational, united community will be a powerful witness to a world of brokenness: broken marriages, broken families, broken relationships, broken communities, disunity between nations, races.

Here is the witness God wants - His church to be a place like no other.

The Bible has a lovely picture of the church- we are called the Bride of Christ.

We are not called to be 40 Brides of Christ - we are called to be THE Bride of Christ.

The moment we become Christians we are called into a communion of fellow believers who are in turn in communion with God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. We are called to live that dynamic relationship we see in the Trinity, a truly shared life.

We become through this shared life what we can't become individually - together we become Christ in all His glory to the world or as someone else put it "our life together is a window into the heart and mind of God".

**Love soaked**

The second attribute is a church that is love soaked.

Two quotes for us to reflect on

"Love is not a quality that God possesses, but the essence of God himself. It is not a minor attribute that characterises God on occasions but the very heart of God, His essential being. It is not a component part of God but His very nature. Before God is anything else He is love."

**"It is only because the Father, Son and Holy Spirit respond to each other in constantly loving relationships that we can say the very nature of God is love."**

In John 15 verse 17 Jesus commands us to love one another . A command from Jesus not a request.

Jesus calls us into a loving relationship; a church abounding in love.

He loved so much He was prepared to die for us.

We need to let that soak in - Jesus loved us that much. Total self giving.

The New Testament refers to agape. The highest form of love. Loving -total self giving

Loving - no hidden agenda

Loving - nothing wanted in return Loving - just wanting the best for others Loving - holding nothing back

Loving - not worried about status.

This kind if love is so different from what the world shows.

And it is this kind of love Jesus commands us to have one for another. And this is tough stuff for a church to grab hold of

To love one another like that is not easy.

It means that despite our differences, our different personalities, our own likes and dislikes, our own wishes and desires we love one another.

Love will bring out the very best God wants for each of us and we will build up into a body of love where every single person will feel accepted, affirmed and valued. Such love can provide a safe place for the hurts that are carried, the brokenness in life, to be lovingly healed.

Let me say just one thing about love. What spoils the look of a beautiful flower? The frost and cold . The brown tarnished edges that spread and spoil.

It is the same for a church. When we are cold or frosty with each other it spoils. If we let the cold into the church it will be tarnished.

It is so easy - and I am guilty as most - to chunter if things don' t go the way I want or get frustrated because someone doesn' t do things the way I would. We need to always show each other love and tolerance

But the iciest blast of all comes when we are judgemental of each ot her. Another command of Jesus - no one judges except him.

And we must always remember it is the church that God sees that matters.

We may be able to cover things up for the world but it is the church God sees that is the one that counts.

As the church is Sardis was challenged in Revelation Chapter 3 verses 1 -2. " I know your deeds; you have a reputation for being alive but you are dead . Wake up. "

Belonging is very important to people today so being a church community reflecting God's love, compassion and loving welcome to all is very powerful .

**Mission Hearted**

The third attribute we need to show is to have a mission heart. The passage from Matthew provides the church with its mission. To go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit . The Trinity is totally involved in this mission.

Throughout the OT and ultimately in Jesus, God's self revelation is of one who loves the world and reaches out in love.

"For God so loved the world He sent His Son" - the ultimate act of love. A loving heart that wants to reach out and gather people to himself.

He wants to bring healing, forgiveness, relationship, hope.

He wants to meet the deep need in all humans - to know they are loved by their creator and that they are of immense value and worth in His eyes.

And part of our task is to faithfully declare and live out what is on the heart of God.

The message remains non negotiable; the message of the cross, the resurrection and the gift of the Holy Spirit.

So if the church is to be tasked with participating in God's mission , if we are to be mission hearted, it can never:

* be exclusive - only for likeminded people
* rest easy, comfortable
* spend more time telling people how we do things rather than leading them to God.
* be shaped by the humanistic and secular fashion of the day
* close its eyes to God's plumb line of disobedience and injustice and say nothing.

We can never dilute the message of the gospel - the message that never changes; the message of a mission hearted God.

But here is a key point that needs grasping if we are to understand mission. Mission is not an activity of the church, not part of our agenda

The church is part of God's mission agenda. Mission is not part of our task

Mission is the task given to us.

Mission is an attribute of God and because we are called to reflect God in our world we have to have a mission heart. We need to share that attribute.

The world is the theatre of God's activity- not the church.

Mission is participating in God's activities in the world. God is already at work in His world . The church has been called to and is privileged to participate in God' s mission .

So, let me encourage you today to think about the Trinity - God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. As followers of Jesus our saviour, we are loved by the Father, and led by the Spirit. All three persons of the Godhead are at work in our lives, in the life of this church, and in the life of this world, God's mission field.

I pray that as we live in new awareness of God in all God's expressions as Father, Son, and Spirit, our spiritual lives will deepen, our vision of God's kingdom will expand, and the work that God has chosen for us will take on a new vitality and urgency.

Amen

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