

Trinity Sunday 2021
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St. Mark's Episcopal Church | Milwaukee, WI
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In today's Gospel story, a great Rabbi in Jerusalem, Nicodemus, travels under the cover of darkness to ask Jesus some questions that are burning on his heart. This is terribly unusual. It's sort of like if Bill Gates had gone in the middle of the night to visit Steve Jobs and to ask him how computer programming works. Jesus was representing a new way of understanding God's relationship with Israel, and Nicodemus was representing an older interpretation of God's actions in the world. They really should have been religious enemies, but instead, they find themselves having a conversation about matters of ultimate concern late into the hours of the evening.

This is Trinity Sunday — the only Sunday of the church year where we commemorate a doctrine rather than an event in the life of Jesus or the disciples. I will admit, I have a hard time figuring out why the church in its wisdom decided to give us something like this to ponder on a Sunday morning.

Is God the Holy Spirit? Yes. Is God Jesus Christ? Yes. Is God the creator of everything and Jesus' divine parent? Also yes. This is something that we usually learn in Sunday school and then promptly forget.

But what if we decide to give the church the benefit of the doubt? What if the Trinity is a pretty beautiful way to think about God?

Contemporary theologians have stressed for many years now that one of the strengths of perceiving God as Trinity is that it emphasizes the place that community, and communion, have in the very heart of God. Christ is in an eternal dance with the Holy Spirit who is in an eternal dance with the Creator of the Universe who cannot help but be in a dance with Christ. And it is this dance that we call God. God is movement and connection and shared power and community. Ancient Eastern philosophers would put it this way: in God's economy, one plus one plus one equals one. God is indivisible, a wholeness more complete and perfect than we can imagine.

Well, that and 3 dollars will get you a coffee at Starbucks. Why should we care? I think it might be that we are invited into that dance; we are invited into that motion. When we receive the Eucharist, are we not invited into the dance of God? When we serve the poor, who Jesus says are his proxies on earth, are we not invited into the dance of God? And when we marvel at the vastness of creation and contemplate the Creator, are we not then also invited into the dance of God?

The Trinity is a corrective to an old, bearded, male God who sits on a throne. It's a way of saying that this God that we worship isn't just some recycled Zeus. Our God is a holy and self-perpetuating relationship into which we have been invited.

And knowing this, I think, has implications for how we treat one another here at church. We are connected to one another in a way that is similarly mystical. Though I see 50 souls here this morning, I also only see one Body. That is more of God's math at work. Though I see 50 souls here this morning, I see one Spirit and people who cannot help but participate in the image of God. So, it is not as if you are separate from a God who lives on a mountain. Instead, you are in a holy relationship with God that dances in the way that the trinity dances among itself.

When next you pray, instead of imagining a prayer that ascends to heaven in some kind of singular line, instead imagine a dynamic process happening all the time between you and God. Imagine an energetic loop that cycles love and mercy and hope and grace into the very center of your being. You are connected to God in a relationship that is indestructible.

So, why Nicodemus? What is it about the first-century rabbi that makes us tell this story year after year? I wonder if it has something to do with the intimacy of that night. In full disclosure, Nicodemus was able to lay bare his soul to Jesus — to ask him all the things that had been burning in his heart. He was able to be honest with Jesus in a way he didn't feel like he could be honest in the daylight. And, in a remarkable way, Jesus took the time to be with him. To be in a relationship with him. To share with him soul to soul. Because Jesus could do no other. Because it is not in the nature of the Trinity to exclude or to cut off. It is in the nature of the Trinity to ingather and to dance. And so Jesus and Nicodemus danced that night. They danced with words and with self-disclosure. But they danced all the same.

So how will you dance with God this summer? How will you dance with the Holy Spirit? I believe that Trinity, far from being a cold doctrine on a shelf somewhere, is instead an ongoing invitation to every believer in this world to enter into a relationship with a God who is a relationship itself. That means you. You are invited. You are invited to dance. If you are not sure how, you can never go wrong with prayer or service or being in relationship with your fellow travelers here. You are being called today to dance with one another, however that looks to you.

So, happy Trinity Sunday, my friends. Come to God with your questions like Nicodemus. Come to God ready to love and to dance. Come to God in need of grace or come to God uncertain. It does not matter, Because the invitation is always waiting for you. Amen.