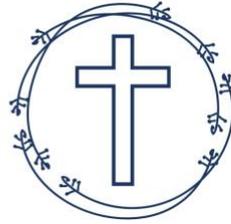


LORDSBRIDGE TEAM OF CHURCHES



The Church's prayer for Sunday 30th May – Trinity Sunday

Holy God,
faithful and unchanging:
enlarge our minds with the knowledge of your truth,
and draw us more deeply into the mystery of your love,
that we may truly worship you,
Father, Son and Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.

Bible readings and reflection for Sunday 30th May

A New Testament reading from Romans, Chapter 8:12-17

¹² Therefore, brothers and sisters, we have an obligation—but it is not to the flesh, to live according to it. ¹³ For if you live according to the flesh, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live.

¹⁴ For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God. ¹⁵ The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship.^[a] And by him we cry, "Abba,^[b] Father." ¹⁶ The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. ¹⁷ Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.

A Gospel reading from the Gospel of John, Chapter 3 verse 1-17

Jesus Teaches Nicodemus

3 Now there was a Pharisee, a man named Nicodemus who was a member of the Jewish ruling council. **2** He came to Jesus at night and said, "Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God. For no one could perform the signs you are doing if God were not with him."

3 Jesus replied, "Very truly I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again.^[a]"

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⁴ "How can someone be born when they are old?" Nicodemus asked. "Surely they cannot enter a second time into their mother's womb to be born!"

⁵ Jesus answered, "Very truly I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless they are born of water and the Spirit. ⁶ Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit^(b) gives birth to spirit. ⁷ You should not be surprised at my saying, 'You^(a) must be born again.' ⁸ The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit."^(d)

⁹ "How can this be?" Nicodemus asked.

¹⁰ "You are Israel's teacher," said Jesus, "and do you not understand these things? ¹¹ Very truly I tell you, we speak of what we know, and we testify to what we have seen, but still you people do not accept our testimony. ¹² I have spoken to you of earthly things and you do not believe; how then will you believe if I speak of heavenly things? ¹³ No one has ever gone into heaven except the one who came from heaven—the Son of Man.^(a) ¹⁴ Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up,^(b) ¹⁵ that everyone who believes may have eternal life in him."^(d)

¹⁶ For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. ¹⁷ For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.

A reflection from Revd David Newton, lead minister in Comberton, Caldecote and Toft

Today is Trinity Sunday. It is the culmination of the story that we have been telling through the liturgy, week by week, right from the 1st week of Advent.

We have heard of what the prophets foretold. We have heard of the messiah's birth, life, and testing. We have heard that he was tried, crucified and died. We have celebrated his risen life, his ascension into glory and the coming of the Spirit at Pentecost.

And so now we come to Trinity Sunday. Here we bring all the strands of the story together and celebrate it all in one moment. Having heard the whole story, we learn to speak of God as Trinity, as One who we also know as three.

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As many of you will know, the doctrine of the Trinity is not something that appears all worked out in the pages of scripture. Instead, the doctrine of the Trinity is the inevitable conclusion to the early Christians' reflection on how God has revealed Godself to be in the person of Jesus Christ and in the outworking of the Spirit.

Or, to put it a different way, the doctrine of the Trinity is the most concise expression of the Good News you could possibly imagine. We hear it in those words from Romans 8. God whom we call Abba, Father – the maker, who is our maker, our life-giver. God who we call Son, who calls us to be sons and daughters with him. God the Spirit who raises our hearts back to Godself.

One God in three ways. And in this 'three ways' is the entirety of the good news.

So, presented with the question, 'what is the Gospel?' The most concise answer there is, is, 'The Trinity!' (Although I would not recommend giving this answer if you're asked on the street).

To say God is Trinity means affirming: God as maker, sustainer, ground of my being; God as known and revealed in the person of Jesus Christ; God as alive and active in us and in this world. All this is the expression of God's Life as it is shared with us and made known to us.

To say God is Trinity also means affirming something about God's own "inner" life, before us, for all eternity: that God is not a static unity, but rather that God's own life is a dynamic relating loving dance. And that means that at the heart of 'things' (or we could say at the heart of reality) is Love. The Doctrine of the Trinity affirms above all else, that the Universe is founded upon, and held by, and will find its end in Love – in the Love that is God's very own life.

So once again, what is the Gospel? The answer - The Trinity. Which is a short-hand way of saying that Love is at the heart of all things; that love that has been shared with us and been made known to us.

The stumbling block of all this, at least for me, is not around some logical nonsense, as if we were proclaiming $3 = 1$ or whatever. (We're not, and we never have). Instead, the difficult thing – perhaps even more so at the moment – is believing that, despite what we see, the last and final Word is not death and darkness but is in fact Love. It is sometimes hard to believe that the universe has its meaning and purpose, beginning and end, in a Word of Love, but that is precisely what a life of faith is all about. It's all about Love, Actually.

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With all that is mind, it is no accident that it is on Trinity Sunday that we, as the Lordsbridge Team of Churches, have chosen to launch a sermon series on the 5 Marks of Mission.

For these, 'marks' – of which I'll say a bit more in a moment – find their beginning and end in the life of the Trinity, in the God who is Love; in the God who pours Love out upon creation.

The 5 Marks of Mission have their origin in the late 1980s and early 1990s, formulated by what's known as the 'Anglican Consultative Council', to help the whole Anglican Communion find a common expression for the task of the church in the world.

These marks are

- To Tell... the good news of Jesus Christ, who shows us that at the heart of reality is Love, and that Love has been poured out into creation,
- To Teach... people that they might know and understand the depth and breadth of the love of God
- To Tend... to those in need
- To Transform... unjust structures in society
- To Treasure... God's good earth

Together, they provide a wonderful, wholistic understanding of what it might mean to live in the Love of God who pours that love out into the world. They give us 5 ways of thinking about how we might share in the Love that God pours out on us.

Over the next few weeks we'll explore each of these marks in more details. But as we do so, we need keep in mind that at the root of each of them is Love. Or to put it another way, that at the root of them is the Holy Trinity. In seeking to live out these marks we reveal that Love is at the heart of reality, and that Love has been poured out on creation.

In seeking to live out these marks we make manifest the good news – that God is Trinity.

Amen.