

#28 15-16

Psalm 8

Proverbs 8:1-4, 22-31

Romans 5:1-5

*John 16:12-15

Truth is Not Easy

"I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now.

When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth; for he will not speak on his own, but will speak whatever he hears, and he will declare to you the things that are to come.

He will glorify me, because he will take what is mine and declare it to you. All that the Father has is mine.

For this reason I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you."

Seven years ago my first sermon to this church was on Trinity Sunday. The Trinity is something that is seen by many as being a bit hard to comprehend, and some even use the Trinity as a reason to disavow Christianity altogether.

But let us keep in mind that everything humans come up with to teach about every faith, is merely an attempt to teach something about the incomprehensible. God is now, and forever will be, more than we could ever know. What we have available to us in traditions, writings, teachings, prayer, and study, are invitations to a *process* which is faith. Faith is the tool to stay searching, to stay humble and growing. Because until that day when all the world is actually living in peace, our humanity is still growing. And the greatest challenge to faith is ignorance and the desire to remain intellectually uninterested.

In our Trinitarian tradition we have; the Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit ~ God, Jesus and the Advocate. And yet, we still claim ourselves as Monotheists - believers in the one true God. This triune aspect of that one God are different ways that we have to experience parts of that incomprehensible God. We all have some understanding, some experiences of God, but I don't think any of us would claim that we have access to knowing fully all of God, but we are pointed in the direction of "our Father who art in Heaven."

We have the tradition of Yahweh, and then we also have the occurrence of Jesus, who out of his relationship to God, was able to live on this earth and teach about how God would have us behave on earth. It was so different - so inspiring - that his followers continued to teach and trust in his life and his teachings. And Jesus knew that his followers would benefit from a continuation of the mystical bond they had with the Holy, and therefore we have what is referred to in this scripture as "the Spirit of Truth." So with this spirit, nothing could stop us from the process of living and learning from God how to be more fully children of the Holy.

And as simple, or as complicated as that may sound, we all know that truth is not easy. In our Old Testament reading we hear a word from "Wisdom". She is speaking in the first person of how primary she is to God and humanity. And yet, so often our human tendency is to want to stop learning, just live off of what we think we already know, never challenge our cultural biases, be content with where we are now in our understanding of faith. But there is such great danger in this complacency. Because our humanity is not yet wise and we have such challenges to our continuation on this planet if we continue to choose our desires and our comfort over Wisdom and God.

Romans 5 is a scripture that can be frightening or consoling, depending on which side of the suffering you are on. No one likes suffering. If we are wise we will not go out of our way to find suffering. But the truth is, humans do suffer. We all find ourselves at one time or another in some form of suffering. Physical pain, emotional pain, spiritual pain . . . loneliness, anger, self control - all things that cause human suffering. And for Paul, when he was writing about suffering, he had already done so much, that he realized there were some positive aspects to it!

He saw that going through suffering with wisdom - the desire to learn and grow, created a new being - created an understanding of God that gave him so much more than if he had not suffered. Character! And this character brought him closer to other humans who suffered, and this suffering had him clinging closer to God, trusting in God, so that his faith did grow! His knowledge that in God one does get truth and strength and love and comfort and HOPE! And hope is what gives our existence a real LIFE.

So the Trinity involves the curiosity to know who God is, the wisdom of learning of Christ, and the openness of trusting in the Holy Spirit.

Suzanne Guthrie wrote about Trinity in this way:

I love that the collects of the prayerbook guide the devotee to pray to God, through Christ (the Son), in the Holy Spirit. That shaping of prayer imprints early in childhood, and imbeds within members of the liturgical church a deeply rooted relationality, a continuous motion, a perpetually open system, and an intimacy with both transcendence and immanence even as the child unthinkingly rattles off her evening prayers without particularly paying attention. Once trained in the Trinity, it's not a great leap to consider the God of multiple dimensions, multi-universes, string theory, and hyperspace. Opening to new perceptions of God's self-revelation is as natural as contemplating innovations in theoretical physics. As I learn and grow I can open to God's Reality more fully if ever increasingly more humbly. Awe deepens. And yet. When you pray, it seems Love surfaces from the deep place where the soul touches the universe. Is that right? Does the soul touch the universe? If that love comes not from something outside but something deep within only, then I am simply made for love. Whether God exists or not, Love lies at the heart and meaning of human life; dynamic, relational, intimate, challenging, open Love.

And this is where we arrive, always, when talking about Faith. Love. If our thoughts of God are rooted in anything other than love, than it is not a Faith in God, but we have gone astray somewhere, stopped striving for truth, and had planted ourselves in ignorance. If we find ourselves judging others, hating others, even fearing others - we are not living in faith. For we have been told, "Perfect love casts out fear." 1 John 4:18a.

So, as one can see, for the challenge of living without fear alone we all can delve right back into the search for God through wisdom. The challenges to us humans to be loving is humbling, and a lifetime experience. "Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never ends." (1 Corinthians 13) I think we can all feel a bit humbled when we hear what love is, and how challenged we all are in getting there and remaining there.

But that is what our human development - as individuals and a cohabitants on this planet - is all about. How do we get there? Do we just give up and continue to live our lives ignorant of the need for love - the need for peace - the need for the grace of God on this creation? Or do we put on our big faith pants and keep trying. And the good news is that we do not have to do this alone. Not only do we have access t the triune God - but we have each other. We just need to set our goals together, share with each other, listen to each other - seek wisdom together - and we will be on the right path. And we may not see the repercussions, of our truth - but they will be there! Truth is not easy - it is not always even evident, but our faith will not be disappointed!

We will share in the Glory of God. That has been promised! AMEN