

## In and With

Proverbs 8:1-4, 22-31

Romans 5:1-5

John 16:12-15

Psalm 8

In its most basic form, the Trinity is just another name for God. Three distinct persons, yet one substance. The topic of the Trinity seems to lose people with the mental gymnastics, but the intellectual nuances are, in my opinion, the least significant things about the Trinity. To understand the mystery of God, we may get further by first getting **out** of our heads. In central Virginia, if you don't come from a catholic background and if you've never attended services at an Anglo-Catholic or high church liturgy, you may not be someone who makes the sign of the cross. To describe a parallel, for those who are mystified by it, the sign of the cross is almost like when Baptists who, when they agree with or want to affirm what the preacher is saying, shout Amen. Not exactly the same, but similar. This ancient practice of crossing oneself is a trinitarian practice, in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. It starts by touching one's forehead and then moving the hand down to the heart. It is a way of recognizing that our beliefs must not exist only in our heads but must be drawn into our hearts. As we enter into the mystery, we allow the mystery itself to enter into us.

After Jesus ascended into Heaven and his followers were left to make sense of who he was and what he had done, they struggled with the difficulty of trying to put words around the ineffable. The mystery of a human God whose body disappeared but whose Spirit remains with us is not easy to describe. It took more than 300 years for Christians to articulate trinitarian theology as we understand it today. And all these years later, we're still trying to wrap our heads around it. But why does it matter? Why are Christians so dogmatic about the Trinity anyway?

The 12th century Richard of St. Victor said, "For God to be good, God can be one. For God to be loving, God has to be two. Because love is always a relationship, right? But for God to

share ‘excellent joy’ and ‘delight’ - God has to be three, because supreme happiness is when two persons share their common delight in a third something – together.” (Richard Rohr) God is entirely joyful and satisfied within godself, within the godhead. But God is so infinitely full and overflowing with joy and love that God’s delight bubbles out into creation and into humanity.

Proverbs speaks of an ancient wisdom that was present at Creation. Christians have always understood this Wisdom to be the divine Logos, the pre-existent Christ, the very Word of God expressed through knowledge and creativity. Our translation says God created wisdom, but the Hebrew word actually means God purchased it, indicating God’s active pursuit and delight in wisdom. This text says in the beginning wisdom was “set up” which literally means woven or braided into the fabric of creation itself. It was through and with wisdom, entwined like strands of DNA, that the world was imagined and created. More than that, this creative wisdom identifies itself as so full of joy that it bubbles over into the world, delighting both God and the creation. And everywhere the Wisdom of God exists, creation flourishes and joy is multiplied.

This is not the only Biblical passage speaking of creation coming through a God who identifies as “we”. The scriptures make it clear that God is not solitary; rather, God invites participation in all God is and does. It’s difficult to understand how a singular God can be “we”, but the important thing is God displays godself to us in partnership rather than hierarchy. Within the godhead, the persons of the trinity are not warring over which is superior. Mutuality, rather than supremacy, is key. God has no limits, so God experiences no need to hoard or restrict God’s resources. After all, Jesus left the glory and splendor of Heaven to make God known to us. \*\*And Jesus never once told his disciples to worship him. He directed their worship to God. Plenty of people bowed before Jesus, which is the natural response of humans in the presence of God, but he just kept directing everyone’s worship back to God. In John, Jesus tells us that “all the Father has is mine”. In God’s

economy, resources are freely shared. And rather than clinging to his divine identity or his ownership of divine wisdom, Jesus says God will give it to **US** through the Spirit.

Did you catch that? Because this is why the Trinity matters. This is the big idea. This is the radical reality that makes Christianity so wild and Christians so shocking. Let me say it in a different way in case you didn't quite capture it the first time.

The God of creation, the all-wise, all -powerful, infinite, boundless God of Heaven and Lord of Hosts...for those who are willing to accept it... This God **LIVES IN YOU**.

When Paul tells us that our boast is in our hope of sharing the glory of God, he is NOT saying that we cross our fingers, close our eyes, and blow out our birthday candles in the hope that one day we will make it. That word "hope" means a firm expectation. It may not be complete yet, but it is not in question. It is our confidence. Our partnership in the glory of God, yes you heard right. Our partnership in the glory of God is concrete because the Spirit of the living God has been poured out into us. Like a hose filled with water, we are conduits of the love and glory of God and just like a hose is filled with water and sprays that water on everything in proximity, God pours out of us... if we allow it... God's boundless glory and love on everyone and everything around us.

The reason the Trinity matters is not because God is far off, and we are incapacitated in God's presence. The reason the Trinity matters is because God is more awesome than we can possibly imagine and God shares that awesomeness in and through us to bless the world God loves so deeply. When we allow God to flow through us, we become God's aqueduct providing refreshment for a parched earth. The ancient term for this is divinization. It is Christians in the process of becoming like God.

If our worship of God paralyzes us, making us so ashamed of our own inadequacy and failures that we become immobilized, we have missed the point of our salvation. It is the very act of faith, stepping out to do what feels impossible, acting from love rather than - qualification, that provides our justification. Trusting God to take the step that feels

impossible, to love in a radical way, to pray with people, to be sacrificially generous, to do whatever God's Spirit leads us to do...that is what Paul means when he says we are justified by faith. Paul says that justification leads to peace, but it isn't in a place free of conflict where we find peace, it is with God in the middle of conflict raging around us where God makes peace known. It is the God in us, the God through us that changes the world around us. When we are filled with the wisdom of the Logos, joy bubbles up from us like it has since the world was created, because it is woven into our very DNA. God's wisdom is the wisdom of limitless peace and joy. That wisdom transforms the world through joy and safeguards us from despondency as we move through the darkness. Our divinization means, regardless of our circumstances, our faces glow increasingly bright with the light of Christ.

Divinization does not mean we become who God is, it means we become what God is. We as individuals and we the church participate in God's glory together. Like God, we do not compete with one another, and we are not threatened by one another. Like God, we are unified even in and through our distinctions. We act from infinite resources, so we fear no lack. We rejoice regardless of the circumstances of our lives. We are bold and we are humble. That is why the Trinity matters. The Trinity means participation with God and that is good news. It is good news for us, for the church, and for the whole world because God wants to heal and shine through us all.

Salvation is accepting the Trinity's movement in and through us.

May we be a people whose worship of the Trinity transforms our lives and the world around us.