

2 Corinthians 13:13 - Three in One



Trinity Sunday, a week after Pentecost, is supposed to be the Sunday that superintendent ministers dread when making the Plan. This is because (it is said) preachers are reluctant to offer this Sunday because they find preaching about the Holy Trinity so difficult! I have to say that in my own Plan making days, I never found this to be a problem, so perhaps it's not really true.

Talking about God, the Three-in-One, only becomes difficult when we attempt to explain what "One God in three Persons" actually means. The earliest Christians don't appear to have tried. They worshipped God as their loving Father in heaven. They knew that God's love had been revealed to them in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. They experienced God's presence with them as Holy Spirit, guiding and empowering them. So it

was natural for St Paul to write of the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit. He encountered God in those three ways himself, and was writing from experience.

It was much later in the history of the Church that people found it necessary to formulate creeds about the nature of the Trinity. This was in response to questionable teaching about the relationship of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit to one another and whether Jesus could be both human and divine. So we speak of Jesus as “eternally begotten of the Father” and the Holy Spirit “who proceeds from the Father and the Son.” These words may have settled some arguments, but they raise more questions if we try to explain what they actually mean!

After all, if we could understand everything about God’s being, it would make us as great as God Himself. There is much we cannot explain about the nature of the life within us and the universe we inhabit; how much less can we expect to be able to explain about God, the Giver of life and the Creator of the universe? We simply have to accept that God is Mystery, far above any of us.

That, for me, is what Trinity Sunday is all about: the greatness, wonder and glory of God. Isaac Watts sums it up like this, in his hymn “We give immortal praise” (Singing the Faith 16): “Where reason fails with all her powers, there faith prevails, and love adores.”

A prayer:

God almighty, eternal, righteous, and merciful, give to us poor sinners to do for thy sake all that we know of thy will, and to will always what pleases thee, so that inwardly purified, enlightened and kindled by the fire of the Holy Spirit, we may follow in the footprints of thy well-beloved Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. AMEN

(St Francis of Assisi, 1182 – 1226)

- Rev John Barnett

Image: The Trinity by Andrei Rublev, 15th Century. *The Trinity* depicts the three angels who visited Abraham at the Oak of Mamre (Genesis 18:1–8), but the painting is full of symbolism and is interpreted as an icon of the Holy Trinity.