

Holy Trinity - Send Me

Isaiah 6:1-8 & John 3:1-17

June 7, 2009

We have come to Holy Trinity Sunday. Within our faith there are many mysteries - many things that we struggle to understand but can not - many things that we try to explain in ways that will seem logical to our limited human understanding - but perhaps none is more difficult than the issue of the Trinity.

Central to what we believe and unique in ancient religions is the belief that there is only one God. But we never-the-less continue to talk about God as 'The Father, Son and Holy Spirit'. If you have been involved in the church for any time at all you have probably had the discussion that tries to explain or understand the oneness of God against the backdrop of the 3 persons of the Trinity. And though there are many analogies that have been offered finally we have to accept that what Jesus says in the Gospel is really true - "If I have told you about earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you about heavenly things?" Heavenly things are just beyond our grasp - no matter how hard we try - through our human ability we can not understand them - and apart from the working of the Holy Spirit in our lives we can not even believe heavenly things.

Sometimes it seems that heavenly things are so far out of our reach that they become 'fodder' for jokes. I read about a National Hockey League goalie that had been having a great season. Along the way he noticed that there was one fan that was always very supportive sitting in the stands right behind the goal. After the last game of the season he went back to the man and invited him to dinner in order to say thanks. The man was very pleased and wondered if he could bring his son, who he explained was also a big fan. The goalie consented. So, that evening when they sat down for the meal, around the table were the father, son and the goalie host. {pretty sad, huh}

I sometimes wonder how important many of these intricate theological details are. We struggle with difficult concepts like the Trinity - and we try to be very precise about the language we use - careful to say that we believe in ONE God who has revealed himself in THREE persons - and in the final analysis - no matter how correct the language (don't get me wrong, the struggle is important and the proper understandings are important) - but in the final analysis we simply can not understand heavenly things. I remember years ago reading an article in which the author used the phrase "Mysterium Tremendum" when talking about God. The article suggested that the intent was to point to the awesome mystery of God. I don't know if those are made up words or words derived from Latin. And frankly, I don't really care - either way, 'Mysterium Tremendum' almost feels to me like it reaches toward the tremendous mystery of God. Finally, for me it seems clear that we can not come close to understanding or figuring out God - all we can really do is try to trust God!

There is a story of a father and son who went mountain climbing. It was a well used trail and as the father and son came to a more difficult part of the trail another climber

passing by called out to the son, "Do you have a good hold on your father, lad?" To which the boy answered, "No, but he has a good hold on me!"

I bet that Isaiah thought God had a pretty firm hold on him. Actually, I am not sure what Isaiah might have thought. He experiences the *Mysterium Tremendum* in a way that we can read in the text but is so 'mysterium' that it defies comprehension. Angels {Seraphs} with 6 wings fly around in a smoke filled Temple. God is present but all Isaiah gets a glimpse of is His robe {actually just the hem of His robe} as it fills the temple. If we don't get too caught up in trying to figure out all of the details we can see that Isaiah is simply overwhelmed by his encounter with God. And that vision of God compels him to consider his own weakness and insignificance. I suspect that in the face of this encounter, Isaiah does what we would all do when we sense the true power and majesty of God - throw yourself on His mercy. And Isaiah does - "Woe to me", I am weak, lost, sinful - - yet God does not turn away but comes to Isaiah. It is then that one of the most amazing things happens. A burning coal is taken from the altar and touches his lips as an act of forgiveness. Sin and guilt are gone. The fear of being in the presence of God is banished and gives way to simple awe of a gracious God.

You know that Isaiah is really just one of us. He had all of the human weaknesses that plague all of us. I am sure that He had hopes and dreams of what he would do with his life. But then - face to face with the awesome mystery that is God - lips burning with forgiveness - there Isaiah does the most amazing thing. He volunteers for service even before being asked. Volunteers, not even knowing what the task is. He simply knows that He wants to serve God. 'Whatever you want God, whatever place you have for me - here I am - send me.'

God is a mystery the life that God has given us to live is a mystery too. What are you going to do with either mystery. It feels as though many in our days have decided that the mystery of God just is not relevant in their lives - they want to believe and perhaps really do believe but just don't know what to do with God - so God just gets set to the side and the mystery of life takes center stage. It is our life and when it comes that life, we decide - very early on we make it known that we want to be in charge of what happens in our lives. Knowing how fervently we try to control our own destiny, it is all the more impressive to see Isaiah simply volunteer to go where ever God will send him.

Could we ever do that - simply volunteer to be sent? I think of that verse in our Gospel text - vs. 8 - "The wind blows where it chooses, and you hear the sound of it but you do not know where it comes from or where it is goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit."

It is a bit scary to simply trust God. We want to be in control. We are not sure that we will like what God asks us to do. The Spirit of God is moving - it is illusive like a wind - God seeks to blow us - guide and direct us - but too often we are just standing still / leaning into the wind - maybe even pushing ourselves to go into the wind. Sometimes we may be so busy fighting the wind and trying to stay in control of our every step that the wind is just irritating - a nuisance.

But on this Holy Trinity Sunday I would just hold before you again the awesome mystery of God. I would note for you that even though this God is a God whom we can not comprehend, we do know that God comes to forgive and bless / forgive and call. Can we again say: "Send Me!" and watch where the Spirit blows us.

Amen