

Hymn: 111 Holy, holy, holy, Lord God almighty

https://youtu.be/39Zfr00UW_s

Prayer of Approach and Confession and the Lord's Prayer

God of Majesty and Mystery, you are the power behind all we see, the grace beyond all we know and the love before all we meet.

We cannot totally comprehend your majesty...your mystery but we only know your presence in our lives: you, who knew us before we were born you, who will cradle us after our last breath...

We cannot totally encompass or understand your glory instead we marvel at all the works your hand has made and we worship and adore you.

It seems too good to be true that you would care for mere mortals like us... in our messy lives often caught-up in trivialities. That you would mould us in your own image social creatures with a divine spark... So good, we'd rather not believe, rather not see your image in those around us crying out for love and companionship; rather not see your wisdom underpinning creation groaning at our wanton waste and exploitation

God above all, help us with our unbelief our incredulity, our self-preserving acts which isolate and harm...our words and actions that do not have love at their hearts.

Pour your mercy and love into our hearts and souls giving us eyes to see and ears to hear your gift in every person - every place - every moment; for your greatness is seen in all the world: may our words and actions be our praise of you reaching up and out into and for your Kingdom, made real for us in the person of Jesus who taught us so much including how to pray saying: Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts as we

forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power and the glory for ever Amen.

Bible Readings: Isaiah 6:1-8, Romans 8:12-17 (NRSVA)

Hymn: 120 God, we praise you, God, we bless you.

<https://youtu.be/rmwm8D9-Z0w>

Reflection

As I said earlier, today is Trinity Sunday. This is **the** special Sunday in the year when we take a step back from following the different stories in the books of Scripture and remind ourselves once again of the difficulty of truly understanding the total being of God. We have this Sunday in our Christian calendar every year to remind us that it is very easy to reduce our understanding and ideas of God and who he is.

The doctrine of the Trinity says that we know and experience one God in three parts or beings - God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. Three persons, parts or beings BUT one God.

The very fact that we worship one God in three parts means that nothing is simple, we can never just rest and imagine we totally understand. Many books have been written by many scholars in an attempt to understand but that's what makes it all so relevant. No matter how we try we can never truly encompass the whole idea and being of God in any concept or any book – if we could then our God by very definition would not be God.

The mystery of God, the otherness or beyond-ness of God can never be totally understood and that is the fascination that captures our thoughts and our imaginations and our very beings.

We can use all sorts of different pictures to try to express the concept of the Trinity – I'm sure you've seen many over the years, the three different aspects of water – steam, ice and water, an egg, the shell, yolk and white of an egg, my favourite - the Mars bar – caramel, nougat and chocolate...perhaps the most common way of portraying this doctrine is the triquetra.

Here is a simple picture of the triquetra.



Our doctrines or beliefs are expressed in the creeds that have been developed over the years. Our creeds try to express what it is that we believe and sometimes they seem to be very easy to say yet are very complicated in thought.

We often say together the Apostles Creed which is an official creed of the church but one of the early creeds of the church called Athanasia's Creed begins like this... 'For there is one Person of the Father, another of the Son, and another of the Holy Spirit. But the godhead of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, is all one, the glory equal, the majesty co-eternal.

Such as the Father is, such is the Son, and such is the Holy Spirit. The Father uncreated, the Son uncreated, and the Holy Spirit uncreated. The Father incomprehensible, the Son incomprehensible, and the Holy Spirit incomprehensible.'

Incomprehensible – For many this word sums up both the creed and the ideas about God that it tries to express. When it comes to the doctrine of the Trinity we sometimes feel that we are out of our depth, struggling with concepts that baffle us, for how can it make sense to talk of three persons who are at once wholly separate yet wholly one and wholly equal?

Perhaps that is the whole point of Trinity Sunday – it reminds us of a truth that we cannot afford to forget: that God is beyond the, human intellect, defying expression, greater than we can ever conceive. We encounter him as a loving Father who is yet sovereign over all; as a human being who lived and died among us yet rose again and is seated at the Father's right hand; and as an inner reality that fills us with love joy, peace and hope and power.

We can see in the Bible how the understanding of God has changed over time. This morning we heard the vision of God that Isaiah had. The people of the Isaiah's time understood that God could be found in the Temple. The Temple was holy ground, in

fact the common person could not enter the holy of holies, a part of the temple screened with veils because that is where God was and only the priests could enter this sanctuary. Even today the Jewish people will not go onto the holy mount in Jerusalem because it was the site of the temple and they might inadvertently step on the holy of holies.

Isaiah's vision is a mighty vision of a huge God who reaches from the temple to the heavens. God lived in his heavenly realm and yet could also be found in the temple and so Isaiah sees in his vision a God sitting on a throne in heaven – up there above the world (remember I've spoken before about their belief of a 3 tiered universe). The God of Isaiah's vision has to stretch from heaven down to earth for him to be present in both realms at the same time.

In the incarnate Jesus we see that God has come down from heaven in a different way and because of his resurrection and ascension to sit at the right hand of God in the heavenly realm we can experience God in Jesus beside us.

God's Spirit who was there hovering over the waters of creation at the beginning of it all, who was with Jesus at his baptism in the form of a dove and is with us through our own baptism is God's gift of presence to us now. He is woven throughout the life and being of creation and the church and weaves us and guides us in the pattern, in the way of God until the work of the kingdom is finally completed.

Many learned people have tried to simplify the concept of the Trinity perhaps the most common way is to see the Trinity as a triangle. Yet a triangle always has one point higher than the other which implies an unequal relationship. Chris Polhill says that we should instead picture the Trinity as a circle. – with no beginning, no end, no top or bottom. God is an existing and eternal relationship – Jesus can say 'I am in the Father and the Father is in me.' Perhaps all of that can be seen in this picture of the Trinity.



No concept or picture ever says it all as the scholar N. T. Wright said "You see, the doctrine of

the Trinity, properly understood, is as much a way of saying 'we don't know' as of saying 'we do know.' To say that the true God is Three and One is to recognize that if there is a God then of course we shouldn't expect him to fit neatly into our little categories. If he did, he wouldn't be God at all, merely a god, a god we might perhaps have wanted. The Trinity is not something that the clever theologian comes up with as a result of hours spent in the theological laboratory, after which he or she can return to announce that they've got God worked out now, the analysis is complete, and here is God neatly laid out on a slab. The only time they laid God out on a slab he rose again three days afterwards.

On the contrary: the doctrine of the Trinity is, if you like, a signpost pointing ahead into the dark, saying: 'Trust me; follow me; my love will keep you safe.' Or, perhaps better, the doctrine of the Trinity is a signpost pointing into a light which gets brighter and brighter until we are dazzled and blinded, but which says: 'Come, and I will make you children of light.' The doctrine of the Trinity affirms the rightness, the propriety, of speaking intelligently that the true God must always transcend our grasp of him, even our most intelligent grasp of him." (N.T. Wright, in *For All God's Worth*)

This – this is the relationship that **we** are invited to join. So we pray *in* God and not *to* God. And **we** dwell in God, in the living God – Father, Son and Holy Spirit. We too are a part of this circle, as Paul puts it – we are heirs of Christ himself and glorified with him. This is the relationship that we experience and this is the relationship that we are invited to hold out to all the people that we meet. This example of relationship within the Trinity is an example of the type of relationship *we* should have with our family, our church family, our friends, our community, our nation, our world. The Holy Spirit of God weaves us and guides us in the way of God until all are part of that relationship and the work of the kingdom is finally completed. Each thread so important and necessary in God's eternal plan. Thanks be to God Amen.

Prayers for Others:

Almighty and everlasting God, beyond all space and time,

greater than our minds can fully comprehend, ruler of all that is, has been, and shall be, we give you thanks for who you are and all that you have done for us.

Loving Father of all, we praise you for your kindness and mercy by which you sustain us and provide for our every need; you are full of goodness and compassion caring for us so we are never in want.

Jesus Christ, our Saviour, we worship you for coming into our lives to be our friend, even our brother; for showing us the magnitude of the love of God, revealing His saving power and His forgiveness, and offering us a new beginning.

We lift your name on high, Lord Jesus, for loving us fully and giving yourself for our redemption - on the cross.

Holy Spirit, free and mysterious as the wind, powerful as the fire, gentle as the dove; we worship you for blowing new life into our hearts, for purifying us from our sins and faults, for teaching and reminding us the words of Christ, and leading us in His light and bringing us his peace.

Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, God of gods, and King of kings, with awe and wonder, joy and gladness we offer you our thanks, and we pray now for your creation, its nations, and peoples, for your church, ourselves and all in need.

We pray for the growth of your kingdom for the threads that you would call to weave together that final picture of your kingdom.

We pray for all those places and peoples experiencing unhappiness, threat, violence, fear and sickness for those who hunger and thirst, for those with no room to call their own for the displaced and dispirited Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, God of gods, and King of kings, bring your peace and love we pray.

Father, Son and Holy Spirit, fill our dark world with your eternal light and love, so that your Kingdom will be established in power and glory! Eternal God, who is Life-Giver, Life-Saver, and Life-Re-newer now and forever. To you be the glory, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, today and through all eternity. Amen.

Hymn: 110 Glory be to God the Father

<https://youtu.be/ikH8DfDADxc>