

Sermon: Proverbs 8:1-4. 22-31 and John 16:12-15 – Trinity Sunday

I'd like to start my sermon today with some words by the Rev Dr Stephen Dawes one of my theology teachers on the SWMTC given when speaking at Truro Cathedral one Trinity Sunday. He said this, "It won't surprise you that today, Trinity Sunday, is, statistically, the day most preferred by preachers for a Sunday off. Perhaps it's because they are confused by the esoteric mathematics of three in one and one in three? Perhaps it's because they have used the famous Irish flora illustration - the three in one of the shamrock leaf – and can't find another one? Perhaps it's because they know that the Doctrine of the Trinity has created more heretics, more schisms and more martyrs than any other doctrine and don't want to take the risk? Perhaps it's because they like to preach about the Bible, and find that the Bible has very little to say on the topic of the Trinity? Or perhaps it's because they just don't want to add to the levels of confusion about, boredom with or incomprehension of the idea that are already dangerously high?" End of quote.

Now one thing that most theologians agree upon is that all language about God is insufficient and ultimately leaves us in a place where we should find ourselves more often when we think and speak about God --- lost for words! So having said that I am going to attempt the impossible and try to explain the doctrine of the Trinity in just under ten minutes? I do think that Trinity Sunday is a very good idea if I'm allowed to say such a thing. I think it's a good idea for three reasons which is a very good sermon structure for Trinity Sunday if ever there was one.

Firstly, this Sunday encourages us to think **bigger** thoughts about God. Some years ago Don Cuppitt wrote a book entitled, 'Your God is too small' - when God brought the children of Israel out of Egypt in the second of the Ten Commandments he tells them, 'You shall not make for yourself an idol' - but whilst Moses was in the process of receiving the Ten Commandments on Mt Sinai - the people were already constructing a golden calf to worship. God knows that left to our own devices we conceive a God who is only a little better than we are, a little bigger than we are and one whom we can explain, predict, put in a box and control. How different from the God of the Old and the New Testament – the God who defies description, who remains the same but is never predictable, who breaks out of every box and all attempts at definition. So let me ask you a question, 'What was God doing before the creation of the world?' When there was no universe to run and no people to care for? What was God doing? Our first reading from Proverbs 8 is perhaps seeking to fill in some gaps. Now many interpreters say this is a personification of wisdom but Tradition and also the lectionary compilers I assume have also suggested that this can also speak in some way about the second Person of the Trinity God the Son, the eternal word – John reminds us in his Gospel prologue that in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God. Proverbs 8: 30 tells us, 'I was daily his delight rejoicing before him always'. Whose delight? The Father's delight and the Spirit's delight. In other words before the world was created God was not bored, not lonely, not needy or desperate for company. God was delighting in Himself the Father was delighting in the Son, the Son delighting in the Father and the Spirit was that bond of delight between them. God is and always will be loving, giving, relational and sociable, because God is Father, Son and Holy Spirit in relationship. That's one way of understanding what we mean when we say God is love – we don't just say God is loving we say God exists in a trinity of inseparable loving relationships. One and yet Three -which leads me to my second point,

Secondly, this Sunday encourages us to **understand** more fully God's thoughts about **us**. The next verse in our Proverbs passage states, that God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit were 'rejoicing in his inhabited world and delighting in the human race'. When I looked up delight in the dictionary the definition was, 'a cause or source of great pleasure'. Well I can believe that God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit can be a source of great pleasure within the Godhead - that God can delight in God but what this verse teaches is that this delight is also poured out upon us. When my Mum died the year before last we had that difficult experience of clearing out the family home in order to sell it. It was getting well into another long day and I debated whether I could face clearing out another drawer and decided I'd do one more. As I opened the drawer of the old desk I found a pile of drawings, paintings and cards obviously produced by a child. As I looked at them more closely I saw that they were my drawings, paintings and cards all kept together. My Mum had kept them for over 45 years these peculiar, messy sometimes incomprehensible splodges and pictures were 'a cause or source of great pleasure to her' - why? Because she loved me. And what the Gospel declares is that God (the Father) so loved the world that he sent God the Son to die for us upon the Cross so that our peculiar, messy sometimes incomprehensible lives could be brought back into that very love and life of the Trinity by the Spirit who comes to indwell us both now and forever. Why? Because he loves us. Which brings me to my third and final point,

Thirdly, this Trinity Sunday encourages us to **understand more fully God's love for those who don't know or even acknowledge him**. In our Gospel Jesus, God the Son, is talking to his disciples in an upper room in Jerusalem about returning to the Father. But the disciples will not be left alone because Jesus promises that the Holy Spirit will come to continue his ministry amongst them. We see in the Incarnation and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit that God is a God who comes to us. God doesn't just say I love you from a distance God enters into our world, our lives and seeks the lowest place and the desperate case - God is the first missionary. Jesus said if you have seen me you have seen the Father as he went on his way teaching prostitutes and tax collectors and healing lepers and Samaritan outcasts. So if all the talk about Mission Action Plans leaves you floundering at best or bored at worst remember that mission was God's idea first. We worship one God Father, Son and Holy Spirit a God who wants to draw all humankind into his Trinitarian love and life as Jesus said as the Father has sent me so now I send you. May God who is Father, Son and Holy Spirit bless you as you love and live for him this week. Amen.