

DSW Written Service for Sunday 4th June 2023 – Trinity Sunday

OPENING PRAYERS

Creator God, whose love for your world is immeasurable ***We worship and adore you***
Lord Jesus, who came to earth to show us how to live in peace and grace

We worship and adore you

Holy Spirit who lives among us to guide and equip us in all things

We worship and adore you

Father God so often we've failed to do and be the things you call us to:

Forgive us and help us to serve you better

Lord Jesus we've promised to serve you to the end but so often we fail to live up to that promise.

Forgive us and help us to serve you better

Holy Spirit we know that you're always near to us but so often we turn away and ignore your strength and power.

Forgive us and help us to serve you better

May God our Father forgive us our sins, through Jesus Christ our Lord, And lead us into new life through the power of the Holy Spirit. **Amen**

SONG (STF 15)

The splendour of the King,
clothed in majesty;
let all the earth rejoice,
let all the earth rejoice.
He wraps himself in light
and darkness tries to hide,
and trembles at his voice,
and trembles at his voice.

How great is our God, sing with me,
how great is our God, and all will see
how great, how great is our God.

And age to age he stands,
and time is in his hands;
beginning and the end,
beginning and the end.
The Godhead, Three in One,
Father, Spirit, Son,
the Lion and the Lamb,
the Lion and the Lamb.

How great is our God, sing with me,
how great is our God, and all will see
how great, how great is our God.

Name above all names, worthy of all praise;
my heart will sing: how great is our God.

Name above all names, worthy of all praise;
my heart will sing: how great is our God.

How great is our God, sing with me,
how great is our God, and all will see
how great, how great is our God.

Chris Tomlin (b. 1972), Ed Cash and Jesse Reeves

READINGS:

2 Corinthians 13.11-13

Finally, brothers and sisters, rejoice! Strive for full restoration, encourage one another, be of one mind, live in peace. And the God of love and peace will be with you. Greet one another with a holy kiss. All God's people here send their greetings.

Matthew 28.16-20

Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

REFLECTION

The epistle & gospel readings today must be the shortest in the lectionary – just 2 verses from 2 Corinthians and 4 from Matthew, presumably chosen because for Trinity Sunday because they both refer to God as Father, Son & Holy Spirit.

Over the centuries there have been lots of discussions about the nature of God. The verses from Paul's letter are familiar because we use them in our worship & meetings, so many of us know them by heart: "May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all".

In the verses from Matthew, Jesus tells his disciples to "go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son & Holy Spirit", again acknowledging the 3 persons of God. Many of us were baptised with those words and we still use them today in baptisms.

Of course acknowledging the 3 persons of the Trinity of God doesn't mean we fully understand how the Trinity works. I know some preachers who deliberately avoid preaching on Trinity

Sunday because they say it's too difficult a concept to explain!

Here's a question: If you were asked to draw a picture of God what would it look like?

I've tried that exercise with people of all ages several times and it's fascinating what different ideas and pictures people come up with. Some people draw a picture of God as creator, immense and powerful, or an old man in the sky (like many mediaeval artists did). Some might draw a figure of Jesus as a man. Some people draw something more abstract like a light, or an image of love, a heart perhaps, or open & welcoming arms.

We're all different so we all have different ways of relating to God and the 3 aspects of the Trinity. Even the songs & hymns we sing use different images of God – as provider, as our good shepherd, our Father – and to Jesus as Son, as our brother, our friend, our Saviour. We don't tend to talk about the "Holy Ghost" any more, instead we use the term the Holy Spirit.

I don't know if you've read the book "The Shack", or seen the film, but if you haven't I'd recommend it. When the main character meets God, God is portrayed as a large beaming African American woman; the Holy Spirit as an Eastern Asian woman and Jesus is a Middle-eastern Hebrew man. Interestingly, none of them are white!

We all have different ways of picturing God but the important thing is that we can relate to God through each and all of the 3 persons of the Trinity – and how wonderful it is that we can. It's easy perhaps to take that for granted.

The early church had many battles about how we understand God before reaching an agreed understanding which forms our creed – a statement of what we believe about God. We don't say the creeds often but today we'll use a shorter form.

Our understanding of God changed because of Jesus and because of the gift of the Holy Spirit who came in power at Pentecost as we celebrated last week. The Jewish faith was firmly in one God, unlike the multiple gods worshipped by the Greeks & Romans. But things had to change when the early Christians experienced the humanity of Jesus as well as his divine nature as God's Son through the miracles he worked & his

Resurrection and Ascension. And then they experienced the presence and power of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, as have millions of Christians since then.

Perhaps it's obvious that we can't fully understand how the Trinity of Father, Son & Spirit relate to each other because God is God, a mystery we cannot fully understand, beyond our knowing. But it's not beyond our ability to experience the deep love that comes through each of the persons of God – Father, Son & Spirit, because Love is what lies at the heart of the community of God. So maybe the simplest way of describing the nature of God is as LOVE. All 3 aspects of the persons of God we experience in our lives on our spiritual journeys are grounded in LOVE.

We know the love of God for us- his provision for our needs, his protection – borne of his love for us.

We know the grace of Jesus – his death for us and the grace & forgiveness we receive in our lives – borne of his love for us.

We know the fellowship of the Holy Spirit in our hearts, in the ways we relate to each other as Christians, in what someone called "the frisson of the Spirit's presence" when we worship together – all borne out of his love for us.

Jesus' command to his friends to "go and make disciples of all nations", tell them about God and baptize them in the name of the Father, Son & Spirit; really a command that as we go through our daily lives, we should keep telling stories of how we experience God as Father, as Jesus the Son & as the Holy Spirit, and how each of these 3 persons of God is a manifestation of his deep love for us.

I hope you have experienced the different aspects of the trinity of God in your life. Speaking personally, I've experienced the deep peace of Jesus in my morning prayers, the presence of the Holy Spirit warming my heart and encouraging me to have faith in God's power when I feel overwhelmed by the tasks of the day ahead, and the joy and wonder of God's provision for us in the glory and beauty of creation.

Jesus talked a lot to his disciples about his relationship with his Father God and the Holy Spirit because he wanted his disciples to know that he was completely united with the Father God and with the Holy Spirit. Father, Son and Spirit. Three, yet completely united as One. And

it was important that his disciples should understand that, because Jesus was telling them & us that's how he wants it to be for us too.

The Bible says we're made in God's image – we're created to be like him, in a community of love together, like the 3 persons of God. We're meant to be in community – through our families, church, friends, just as God, Father, Son & Spirit are united in their love for one another. And we can be in community in the way we talk to each other, help each other, pray for each other, care for each other in practical ways – these are the ways in which community is being formed and strengthened among families, friends, neighbours & strangers.

Perhaps the greatest verse in the passage from Matthew is at the end, where Jesus says "I'm going to be with you till the end of time." So God in Jesus through the Holy Spirit is with us all the time, helping us to understand how to live our lives in his ways of love. Today on Trinity Sunday I invite you to reflect on what a gift it is that we can know each of these 3 aspects of God's love in our lives at any time.

Imagine if any one of these aspects of God were missing – if, for example, we didn't have the experience of God as our Father – "Abba" – "daddy" in the literal translation. It's wonderful to know that our God is an amazing God, creator of all that is- in the words of the song "My God is so big, so strong and so mighty, there's nothing that he cannot do!" To know that He is the one who knows us better than we know ourselves and loves us! The one who provides for all our needs whatever we may be facing – the Rock and Anchor of our souls (to quote other verses from scripture & song).

Imagine if Jesus hadn't come to live like us on earth as a human, to show us God's love and teach us a new way of living by grace & forgiveness. It's wonderful to know that Jesus, God's Son, is our friend and our brother, he's walked this earth and lived our lives, he knows firsthand what we're going through because he's been there. And he loves us enough to die for.

Imagine if when Jesus died he'd left us on our own to cope as best we can with life. But he hasn't and he doesn't. And it's wonderful to know that the Holy Spirit of God is with us always- to the end of time! We

can know the comfort of Gods' presence with us always and everywhere we go. Through his Spirit we're given the power to do amazing things we cannot do on our own. And we can experience all the fruits of the Spirit, love, joy peace, hope, patience, kindness, goodness gentleness, faithfulness, self control. Through the Sprit we are being changed gradually from the inside out into the likeness of Jesus.

Father, Son and Spirit, different from each other, but united as one by their love for each other and for us.

Jesus told his friends that he & his Father were one and that he wanted each of us to be one with them too, and that the Holy Spirit would help us understand the things he taught.

God the 3 in 1 wants to be at home in us, and for us to be at home with him – all of us are invited into the heart of God, as his beloved children. God loves us, as Father, as Jesus the Son and the Holy Spirit, and invites us to experience that love for ourselves and to be united with each other and with God in our hearts

In his letter, Paul says "greet one another with a holy kiss". And wherever we are, we can share our stories of what God our Father, Jesus our saviour, and the Holy Spirit are doing for us each day. And we can continue to commit to live within, and share with each other, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, now and always. Amen.

SONG (STF 11) :

Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty!
Early in the morning our song shall rise to thee:
holy, holy, holy, merciful and mighty,
God in three Persons, blessed Trinity!

Holy, holy, holy! All the saints adore thee,
casting down their golden crowns around the
glassy sea;
cherubim and seraphim falling down before thee,
who wert, and art, and evermore shalt be.

Holy, holy, holy! Though the darkness hide thee,
though the sinful human eye thy glory may not
see,
only thou art holy; there is none beside thee,
perfect in power, in love, and purity.

Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty!
All thy works shall praise thy name in earth and
sky and sea;

holy, holy, holy, merciful and mighty,
God in three Persons, blessed Trinity!

*Reginald Heber (1783-1826) (alt.)
Based on Revelation 4:8-11*

PRAYERS

Heavenly Father, Jesus our Saviour, Holy Spirit
our comforter and friend - wonderful God, three
in one, we praise & thank you that we can come
to you in prayer with all that concerns us and all
our heartfelt desires.....

We bring to you those in our world who need
our prayers ...

those who are struggling with illness, in hospital
or at home, undergoing or awaiting treatment...

those who are worried, anxious or lonely,

those who don't have enough food /clean
water/safe housing and proper healthcare.....

those who live in places of conflict.....

people facing difficult decisions or who are forced
to make new beginnings ...

members of our family, our church family, our
friends...

people known personally to us, or who are
strangers, who are on our minds.....

We pray for your church throughout the world,
exploring new ways to worship and live in fellowship
with you. Bind us together in the power of your
Holy Spirit across the earthly boundaries of time and
space, so that together we can bring to you our
united voices of praise and adoration – for you are
worthy of all praise!

We pray for all those who have revealed the love of
Jesus Christ to us, workers, carers, friends, family,
intercessors and strangers – we praise and thank you
for their blessings and ask you to help us to be
channels of your blessings and love to each other, as
you asked us to.

We pray for all those who need the comfort of your
healing presence and peace today.....
and for ourselves.....

Father God in sickness heal us
Jesus in sickness heal us
Spirit in sickness heal us

Father God in stress calm us
Jesus in stress calm us
Spirit in stress calm us.

Father God in tiredness rest us
Jesus in tiredness rest us
Spirit in tiredness rest us

Father God in danger protect us
Jesus in danger protect us
Spirit in danger protect us.

Father God in weakness strengthen us
Jesus in weakness strengthen us
Spirit in weakness strengthen us

Father God in death welcome us
Jesus in death welcome us
Spirit in death welcome us

Loving Father surround us, Jesus our Saviour fulfil
us, Holy Spirit uphold us,
Trinity of God, give us and all those we hold in
our hearts and pray for, your peace. Amen.

THE LORD'S PRAYER

SONG (STF 338)

There is a Redeemer,
Jesus, God's own Son,
Precious Lamb of God, Messiah,
Holy One.

*Thank You, O my Father,
For giving us Your Son,
And leaving Your Spirit—
Till the work on earth is done.*

Jesus my Redeemer,
Name above all names,
Precious Lamb of God, Messiah,
O for sinners slain.

When I stand in glory
I will see His face,
And there I'll serve my King forever
In that holy place.

*Melody Green (b1946) and Keith Green (1953-1982) © Birdwing
Music, admin Song Solutions Daybreak*

BLESSING

May...

God the Father watch over us
God the Son walk with us
God the Spirit work through us
Until we meet again

And may the Blessing of God, the Holy Three-in-
One, be with you, all those whom you love, all
those who love you, and all those you have yet to
love, today and always. **Amen.**

*Rev Jane M Wilson
May 2023*