

## **Trinity Sunday – Matthew 28:16-20 – June 7, 2020**

**Rev. Rachel A. Wann**

Today is Trinity Sunday. It is one of those Sundays where pastors either completely avoid trying to make sense of the doctrine of the Trinity that says that the God we worship is one God, yet is also three distinct persons, or, rather than avoid, pastors go into lengthy discussions, using metaphor and physics to try to explain to the human mind how the Trinity can possibly exist. That is enough of a challenge in any given year.

Now, add to that, the challenge of having to talk about the Trinity while we are into the third month of a global pandemic, when everything that we once thought routine has been turned on end and inside out. And maybe a theological discussion about a difficult doctrine is absurd at best.

And still, if that wasn't bad enough, imagine talking about the Trinity, in the midst of a global pandemic, while our nation is sharply divided and communities around the country are playing host to civil unrest and demonstrations due to the ongoing reality of deeply embedded racism and the continuation of the targeting and killing of people simply due to the color of their skin.

And today is only Thursday, when I am recording this. Who knows what may happen before this airs on Sunday? This is one of those times that I am struggling with exactly what to say to you all. So much is going on around us, and when it comes to how we how we handle living in the midst of pandemic, or how we support the effort to end systemic racism, or how we demand peace, equality, and justice for those recipients of hatred and violence, and how we heal the division that we see in the world around us, there are many powerful voices now speaking that are much more enlightened than mine. Like you, I need to listen to them. I need to change my own habits, patterns, and beliefs, and I need to act to make this world more equitable for all.

But today I can offer two words that this Trinity Sunday offers us for living into this current situation in which we find ourselves. One comes from the scripture passage from Matthew's gospel. We know it as the Great Commission, when Jesus gives his followers his authority and the command to go out into the world and make disciples, baptizing them into the family of God, using the trinitarian formula, in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that he has commanded them.

We remember the Great Commission. It is that call to all of us, to continue the work that Jesus began while he was on earth. But there is also a Great Promise. And we sometimes overlook that. Jesus also says, remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age. He reinforces the promise of God, that God loves us and will forever be with us. No matter the circumstances, God is here. As we face the news of each day, we do so, always within God's

presence and God's gentle care and concern. It is a word of hope in all times, but especially in uncertain times. A word of hope not just for today, but for each unknown day that comes after. A word of hope not just for us, but for all who long to hear it. Jesus promises to never abandon us, no matter the circumstances. It doesn't mean we won't experience pain or heartache. It does mean that we will never experience alone.

The other word that Trinity Sunday brings to us is this – God's very existence is one of relationship. We may not completely understand the physics of "God in three persons" – how it works – but we can see that an integral part of God's personhood is eternal relationship. If God cannot exist without relationship within God's self, how can we possibly exist without relationships? If relationship is a basic reality of God's identity, and we humans were created in God's image, then how important are relationships to us humans?

The building of relationships with people who are different than we are is so important for healing what divides us. We have to also be willing to listen to the personal stories and validate the experiences of others. Unless you are a person of color, you can never understand what it is like to live a day the life of a person of color. The only way to catch a glimpse of it is to actively listen. The protests that we are seeing around our country are a result of not listening to the ongoing pain of others.

Relationship can only begin when there is a willingness to hear a personal narrative that is different from our own. Relationship is easy when you hold many things in common with someone else. It becomes harder to form relationships when the differences are many, especially when the personal narrative contradicts our own. Relationship requires us to see and experience the world through someone else's lens of understanding. This can be a painful process, especially when it reveals our own complicity in unfair systems.

Because our faith is so connective in nature, it compels us to reach out in compassion toward others. The love that God has shown us in Jesus Christ is meant to flow through us to others. In his ministry, Jesus was constantly reaching out in love to others. How can we reach out in love to others, and make disciples of all nations, if we are unwilling to form a relationship? Or at the very least, begin to see the humanity in others.

God is with us and God gives us the gift of relationship. In this time of ongoing turmoil, may we trust in God's presence with us and may we seek to learn more about and build relationships with those who are different, so that we can truly share God's love with all.