

Trinity Sunday B
Grace Lutheran Church
Lakeland, FL
May 30, 2021

Isaiah 6:1-8
Psalm 29
Romans 8:12-17
John 3:1-17

Grace to you and peace from God the Father and from our Lord Jesus Christ.

This Sunday, we are entering a new season in the Church Year – Ordinary Time. Ordinary not because it is “plain old” time; ordinary because each Sunday is numbered with reference to time after Pentecost. At the times of these shifts in season, there is almost always a festival day or other significant observance. For example, at the end of the season of Easter, we had the Festival of the Pentecost. Here at the beginning of the season of ordinary time, we observe Holy Trinity Sunday. Late into the Fall at the end of this season of ordinary time, we observe the Reign of Christ Sunday. At the beginning of the next season, we have the first Sunday of Advent. The liturgical year provides us with a rich opportunity to join into these seasonal rhythms that have existed for over hundreds and hundreds of years and in some cases for more than a millennia.

So, we turn then to the readings for today. These words from the first reading are our text for today’s meditation:

For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as children by whom we cry, "Abba! Father!" The Spirit itself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ...

(Romans 8:15-17a)

It was the fall of 1940 and a young woman who was a nursing student found herself pregnant, yet unmarried. When she had decided to end her life by suicide, she applied for a life insurance policy so that some legacy could be left for her family. The insurance company required a medical exam by her family physician who quickly discerned what was happening in his young patient’s life. During a very important conversation between them, he told her that he knew of a family in another town several miles away who was eagerly looking to adopt a baby. All plans were put into place and in the spring of 1941, my husband, Earl was born and adopted by his parents.

The adoption process of course was a legal one establishing legal relationships between him and his adoptive parents. A relationship created by the law, established by the law, sanctioned by a judge. A relationship in which there were mutual benefits and responsibilities. One of these benefits was the same as that identified by Paul in his letter to the church at Rome – we have been adopted as children of God and because of this adoption, we are heirs – heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ. One who is adopted is an heir in the same way as any biological son or daughter. A legally binding relationship clearly established.

This section of Scripture is one of the very few in the Bible in which we see reference to each of the persons of the Trinity – we have received the SPIRIT of adoption – we cry Abba FATHER

because we are children of God and we are joint heirs with CHRIST. Perhaps with Nicodemus in today's Gospel, we scratch our heads and say, "how can these things be?"

Today is Holy Trinity Sunday. A day in which we focus on the essence of God – God's very identity – one God, three persons. One God – not divided. Three persons – not confused with each other. Today is the only Sunday in the year that is dedicated to a teaching or a doctrine of the Church.

Our understanding of the Trinity – of one God and three Persons – is best summed up as God whose very nature is relationship. God who is Father, Son and Holy Spirit – three persons existing in perfect relationship with each other, each person participating fully in the life and experience of the other, bound together by love, living love, inviting love, relating with each other and with all of creation in this divine love. This is the God we worship every Sunday.

One of the miracles that resulted from that legal relationship that was established between Earl and his adoptive parents was that over 60 years later all sorts of other relationships were recognized and embraced. Through an intricate series of steps, that I'm happy to detail elsewhere, Earl discovered his relationship with his 4 half-brothers, and a giant net of relationships unfolded. Overnight, literally overnight, Earl and I who were both only children became a brother, a brother-in-law, sister-in-law, uncle and aunt. Our sons were suddenly nephews. And Earl was again son to his birth mother.

We were in the midst of relationships born of love and care, not mere legal and judicial proclamation. That is an inadequate and brief glimpse into the relationships that the Trinity enjoys within itself – a relationship that is not restricted to itself but stretches throughout time and space to embrace the world, indeed, the entire cosmos. A relationship in which the love that is shared gives rise to a vitality that permeates and engages all that is, both seen and unseen.

When I was a young girl, I watched my Dad dance at family events. I counted his steps, listened for the rhythm and the beat. Watched the twists and the turns. Then came the day when Dad took me by the hand and we went out onto the dance floor and rather than my watching or analyzing or scrutinizing, he and I just danced. Sometimes clumsily taking mis-steps, most certainly I stepped on his toes every now and again. But we danced. He didn't drag me around the dance floor instructing my every step. He didn't let go of me so that I'd have to go it alone. No, listening to the music, feeling the joy of moving, we just danced.

What? God dancing? Yes, God moving with joy, moving for the pleasure of it. God creating beauty in an eternal rhythm. When have we had glimpses of this dance? When have we been taken to the dance floor?

Before there was anything that is, all was chaos and confusion. And the Spirit hovered over the waters. The Father spoke things into being. And it was very good. And the holy breath was breathed into Adam and Adam became a living being. And Jesus' fingerprints were all over this good and beautiful creation. Not one thing that was created came into being without Jesus. The dance of creation.

Lifetimes later, the Father sent Angel Gabriel to Mary to proclaim the very good news that the Holy Spirit would come upon her and the Father's Son would be conceived and would be born. Jesus. Emmanuel. God with us. The dance of incarnation.

In the days after Jesus' resurrection, the Spirit was poured out upon Jesus' followers and a tidal wave began that has continued to this day. The dance of the abundant love of God.

And it is the dance of the Trinity to which Jesus invited Nicodemus to join. "How?" he asked. And Jesus said that being born of water and the Spirit brings one into the Kingdom of God, on to the dance floor where we live and move and have our being. Yes, it is in our baptisms that we join this dance. This dance of perfect love, full and life-giving relationship. This dance of creation in community with its Creator.

Amen. May it be so.