

St Paul's Manuka – Trinity Sunday - 22 May, 2016.

Proverbs 8: 1-4, 22-31

Psalm 8

Romans 5: 1-5

John 16: 12-15

Our Gospel passage today sounds a little complex, and in some ways it is. In another way it's pretty simple. It is really talking to us about who God is and how God is known by people as God the Trinity – the relationship of Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

In the Gospel Jesus is speaking with his friends, telling them that he has many things to tell them but that for some of them, perhaps all of them, they are not ready to hear it yet. He says that there will be a time when the Spirit will make things clearer for them. Jesus also speaks about God the Father and about how everything the Father has, Jesus also has.

Jesus is talking to us about who God is and the relationship of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit – what we call the Trinity. It is in this relationship that God and God's love is known by people. God the Father creates the world and everything in it. God the Son (Jesus) is sent by the Father to bring us back into relationship with God. God the Holy Spirit helps us and guides us into truth and understanding. The Church has called this the Trinity and we celebrate that today in our church calendar. Trinity really means three, God - the creator, the redeemer and the sanctifier. Not three gods but one God who comes amongst in love as the creator, as the redeemer of all the world and as the spirit of power.

Now if all this sounds a little theological and obscure remember that the Church has wrestled with the doctrine of the Trinity for thousands of years. Perhaps it is best to approach this doctrine through the notion of relationship. Perhaps we can ask the question: 'How does someone know that God as the Trinity really exists?' Well it is a lot like love. We know that we love someone but we cannot prove it by scientific methods or just by talk. We cannot take the love out and put it on the table and have a good look at it from every angle.

Love, if it is true, is rarely proved by talk. Love if it is true is usually proved when people see it and feel it. Love is found in the living and the sharing of that love. It is as people see you and the person you love together that they know you are in love. Proof is in relationship, not logic and words.

How does all this relate to what I am saying about relationship with God?

One of the most frequent questions I have been asked over the years as a priest is, 'How do I know that God really exists and loves me?'

This is a very good question, but I cannot prove that God exists and loves you by words and thoughts alone any more than you can prove you love someone by words and thoughts alone. Just like love I cannot produce God by some scientific means and put God on the table so that we can examine God from every angle.

Like people who fall in love - we can only know God and God's love for us as we live in relationship with God. This has been the experience of my life - I have come to know God through relationship with God and through a daily walk with God, fed by the Scriptures, nourished by worship, especially the sacraments such as we share together today and by the way God has worked in life. I am certain that for many of you it is the same. Relationship requires a step of faith and trust that we are loved. We have to take the risk of believing in the God who created the world and everything in it. We have to take the risk of believing in Jesus, who came and lived with people, died and rose again, so that we might be brought back into relationship with God. We have to take the risk of knowing the Holy Spirit, who guides and strengthens us in faith and life. It is a risk because we do it by faith not by science. All this is about love and it is only known deep down in our souls as we come to know and love God by faith, not by rational means. The amazing thing is that once we take the step of faith, God shows us more and more of God's life and love for us and we know more and more of God in our daily life - God changes us.

The Christian faith is not simply a set of ideas or rules that you have to learn and obey. The Christian faith is a relationship between God and people in which we know that God created us, that God loves us through the work of Jesus and that God guides us through the power of the Holy Spirit.

I could stand here talking about God all day but that would not make you a Christian. It would just be talk. You can only be a Christian if you enter into a relationship with God and if you begin to know and love God, through Jesus and in the power of the Holy Spirit. It is a life's work and sometimes it is not easy, but things that matter and are worth something are like that. They require work and persistence, trust, faith and love to

allow them to grow. Words and ideas can help us to understand God and what God does for us, otherwise I wouldn't be speaking to you, but words and ideas can never be enough. Words and ideas cannot take the place of a loving relationship of faith and trust in the God who creates, redeems and sustains us.

It is only when we make a commitment of faith to follow God through Jesus and the Holy Spirit that things begin to change. God creates us and all the world and sustains us in life through the power of God's Spirit. God shares our life through Jesus and when we respond to that by faith, when we enter into a relationship with Jesus as a daily walk, God begins to change us. This is the message of the Trinity – One God in three persons, where the three persons – Father, Son and Holy – are in relationship with each other and in that totality of love, in relationship with us.

When you fall in love with someone - deeply and truly, you give yourself to them, you rejoice in being with them and allowing their life to become part of your life. True love is about giving to someone else - giving yourself, your time, your energy and your love. You long to be in their presence and when you are in that presence you too feel loved. When you share your life with someone that begins to change you and to change them. You grow together in love as our marriage service says.

It is my prayer for you that you might continue to take a step of faith in God and grow in God's love. God has done a great deal for us all, in the plan of creation, in Jesus and in the Spirit. We must take the next step and respond to what God has done for us. We do that by a step of faith and trust in the relationship that is the Trinity. We do that by our daily walk with God as we read the Scriptures, as we worship and as we live out lives in the service of God and other people. It is not a once in a lifetime experience but an experience we have every day of our life if we live in the faith of God. It is a life's work. May you continue to take that step and know the God who shares life with you and changes you in love.