

Holy, Holy, Holy / Trinity Sunday A 2011  
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Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God almighty, God in three persons, blessed Trinity...

Who is this God we worship? Human beings have been wrestling this question throughout all time. Who is God? What is God's relationship to humanity? And this is not a dispassionate, intellectual inquiry. Our longing to define God is also a longing to understand ourselves. Who are we? What is our purpose? What gives our lives meaning?

This quest for meaning gives rise to more questions about God and the "God question" in turn drives our endless attempts to wrap words around something that, in the end, words can never really capture---yet still we try. What is the nature of this God who pursues our broken humanity with such infinite, merciful love?

Often our best attempts fail because even our Biblical history shows us images of God that are widely varied and deeply paradoxical. We can trace this paradox running like a common a thread throughout both the Old and New Testaments. On the one hand God is described as transcendent and unknowable; so high and lofty that only poetry and symbol can offer us a glimpse of the knowledge of God.

I think our innate understanding of God's "unknowability" speaks to our intuitive sense that it's not simply "all about us." Having a sense of God's "holy otherness" gives us a larger context in which our own quest for meaning takes place.

And yet, still other holy texts speak of a God who is immanently knowable and actively involved in human affairs. This understanding of God speaks to our desire to be in relationship, to feel and experience God, to partner with God to make a difference in the world.

Our sense of God as both unknowable and yet deeply entrenched in human affairs creates an intellectual tension that makes our brightest theologians scratch their heads in perplexed wonder.

Renderings of the "Doctrine" of the Trinity often sound static and fixed—and the more words they pile on just made it more nonsensical---I think it all starts to sound like the adults in a Peanuts cartoon----- The Trinity is 'wa wa wa wa wa wa.'  
Like this one:

"Jesus is the Logos, existing in the Father as God's rationality and then, by an act of God's will, being generated in consideration of the various functions by which God is related to creation, but only in the fact that Scripture speaks of a Father and of a Son and of a Holy Spirit, each member of the Trinity being co-equal with every other member, and each acting inseparably with and inter-penetrating every other member,

with only an economic subordination within God, but causing no division which would make the substance no longer simple.”<sup>1</sup>

Doesn't that make you feel simply inspired!

But as nonsensical as word play can become when trying to describe a mystery, our quest to understand and know the character of God is always an urgent matter in the Church.

And when I think of how many lives have been taken and how much blood has been shed and how many wars have been launched and how many divisions we have created between ourselves---all in God's name---- I am astounded by how we can sometimes get the character of God so very wrong---and how we will use our Holy Scripture as a blunt instrument against one another.

Amid all of the scripture presented to us this morning I am reminded of how this war still rages around the-- O so familiar--- Creation story from Genesis. We often forget that there are two of these Creation stories in the Book of Genesis and they are indeed different. (Go, look it up for yourselves!)

I cannot help but to think how the priestly writers who composed the words we hear today--- way back in the time of Israel's exile in Babylon---- would be aghast to think that their beautiful, poetic, liturgy in celebration of God's delight in the world has been taken so literally. Not only do many educated people take this scripture literally---they have turned it into a political and social debate that is still dividing God's people in droves.

And on the other end of the spectrum we rationalists and modernist like to speak loudly of the Creation stories as mythology; as a story about the enduring structure of reality. As Old Testament scholar Walter Brueggemann likes to point out, this Creation story is no more about an abiding structure of reality any more than it describes a historical happening.

And I say all of this because an endless division of God's people, especially over the character of God and the meaning of our holy texts is the very antithesis of the true nature of God that the Doctrine of the Trinity seeks so hard to capture.

What we actually hear today is beautiful, poetic liturgy written for a people who felt abandoned by God and who had lost much of the memory of what it meant to God's chosen people.

What we hear is deeply covenantal language that reminds all of us that indeed *all of the world* is God's domain and that God is bound to creation and creation is bound to God--and even more than that---we hear that everywhere and at all times God *delights* in creation---God delights in it all: the earth, the animals, the human.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Cited by Hans Kung Omig in *Synthesis*.

<sup>2</sup> Cecilia B Sinclair in the *Interpretation Bible Studies*, "Genesis" Westminster John Knox, 1999.

This Creation story is not interested in how the world came to be. What we hear is joyful proclamation, we are called through the creative word of God into a relationship which is shaped by delight and blessing. Six times we hear God declare creation “good” and then when God’s work is complete we hear God’s delight elevated to “very good.”

*“God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good.”*

In this ancient text we can see clearly that the character of God is not coercive or authoritarian. God invests blessing and delight into the operation of the world. God’s delight and blessing rests on the land, the living creatures and on humankind.

The character of God is gracious, and in God’s image we are meant to be creatures of graciousness, delight, and blessing. We are formed to reflect the character of God in our care of each other and the natural world around us. Humans, as those who are made in the image of God, are meant to be co-creators with God and to tend the earth and do all in our power to assure the well-being of all that God has made.

So....where does all of this leave us on the Doctrine of the Trinity? I’m really not sure!

In the end, for me, as I lay my head on my pillow at night all I know is that attempts to understand God with only my intellect driven theories are bound to fail. And conversely, an inane literalism that asks me to surrender mystery to the stupidity of superstition is no good either.

Life with God is not about intellectual thought or blind obedience —I believe it *is* about graciousness, delight and blessing; the gracious delight and blessing of God that rests not only *on us*, but *in us!* Despite all evidence to the contrary, we truly do share in God’s creative and re-creative life.

Maybe the Trinity is about calling us into God’s dynamic, life-giving force---a force that is alive and reminding us daily to seek not only the true character of God, but which also invites us to be swept up into delight and blessing. Delight and blessing for our neighbor, for our enemy, for our land, and for the multiple creatures that God also proclaims as good!

Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God almighty, God in three persons, blessed Trinity. Amen.