

Sermon for Sunday 4 June 2023 – Trinity Sunday

Revd Canon Simon Pitcher, Rector

Isaiah 40.12-17,27-31; Psalm 8; 2 Corinthians 13.11-13; Matthew 28.16-20

[Opening missed]

The idea that I was trying to put to Year Six was the idea of relationships. So what is it that makes us who we are? Each one of us has a personality that's unique. We each of us have a physical appearance unlike anybody else's. We each have different gifts and talents which give us a unique sense of self, don't we?

But each of us cannot stand alone. Our uniqueness finds its value in the way that we relate to others. So if you think back, parents and siblings form us into the adults that we become. Our friends at school share with us our learning and our growing. Later in life, we might have colleagues, customers, suppliers, friends. Each of us lives our lives in a community with neighbours and friends. And when we come to church, we don't come to church alone, we don't come to worship alone. We come to worship and we come to pray together. But we say, don't we, one body with many members? So we live and we move and we have our being in the way that we each of us relate to those who are around us. And I wonder how it would feel if we had no interaction whatsoever with anybody else. We'd feel so totally alone, wouldn't we? So totally desolate, empty, lost, if we had no interaction at all with anybody else.

So the Bible says that we are made in the image of God, which therefore suggests that there must be about the nature of God, the importance of relationships, life in relationship. The poet John Dunn wrote, 'no man is an island', his point being that every individual needs each other and that people are better together than they are in isolation. And that that points us towards the nature of God.

St John says God is love. The nature of God is love, perfect love. But what is love if you have nothing to love or no one from whom to receive their love? So God is love. And that love is the love that is shared between Father, Son and Holy Spirit, in perfect unity. So if you imagine the human body, for a moment, we have rushing through our bodies, blood, coursing through our veins, don't we? Our blood rushing around; and our blood gives us life. Well, rather than blood, it's prayer and it's worship which circulates around the nature of God rather than a static idea of God. I think we can understand God as dynamic. Dynamic and living and moving and loving - the life of the Trinity, being, prayer, worship, love flowing round between Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

And this worship in this prayer brings forth life. So, to quote from St Paul writing to the Colossians, he writes, 'The Son is the image of the invisible God, the first born over all creation. In him, all things were created, things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible. All things have been created through him and for him; he is before all things and in him all things hold together.' So I said that love brings forth life

didn't I. Why did God the Father create things through and for the Son? Why bother doing that? Why did the Father create things through and for the Son? The answer is love.

So I want to think again about families. Just think about the idea of a family. The model of a family begins with two people, doesn't it? And the dynamic that draws two people together is love. Love energises them and gives life to their relationship and that love is mutual, it's reciprocal, a dynamic flow of love and it creates life. We are made in the image of God and that means to love, to give and to receive and to rejoice in love.

But thinking about families, the love of two people together in a family isn't closed, is it? Love might be enjoyed by a couple living together in unity but perhaps the fruitfulness of their relationship is to be open to the possibility of a child. So, human relationships are not closed in love, or selfish, or exclusive, but are open to the possibility of drawing others in, to new members entering into that relationship of love and the family perhaps therefore is an illustration of what I'm trying to say. So we're made in the image of God. Love is an expression of that likeness and the idea of a family is a possible pointer towards what I'm trying to say - how love flows, is enjoyed and shared and gives life.

So a couple more Bible verses; 1 John 4 - 'Dear friends, let us love one another. For love comes from God. God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God and God lives in them.' So when we understand God as Trinity we can feel that in Jesus, God is reaching out to us in love, and our nature is to respond. We've been created to respond. St Augustine wrote 'Our hearts are restless until they find their home in you.'

So it's interesting to think that when we gather in worship, when we pray, when we do these things together in love we are adding our prayers and our worship to the life of heaven. When we pray to the Father, we do so in the name of the Son, through the power of the Holy Spirit. When we gather in worship this morning we, in the Eucharist, will receive the life of the Son offered to us in bread and wine, effective for us through the Holy Spirit, poured out upon us by the love of the Father. When we say we share Holy Communion, what we say is though we are many, we are one body because we all share in one bread. So unity, together, togetherness, making us one even though we're many of us here.

So what do we do with these thoughts? What do we do with it? What's our response? Well, the command of Christ Jesus is this - 'A new command I give to you, love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. And by this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.' Remember his command to make disciples of all nations - how will we do that? Only if we show that we love one another. And St Paul writes to the Corinthians about the nature of love - 'Love is patient; love is kind; it does not envy; it does not boast; it is not proud; it does not dishonour others; it is not self seeking; it is not easily angered; it keeps no record of wrongs; love does not delight in evil, but rejoices with the truth.' So St Paul is suggesting that that is the character of the Church and the nature of the relationships that make us one.

And how can we live like that? How can we fulfil that ideal - only by the gift of the Holy Spirit that we celebrated last week. The Spirit who enables us to pray, the Spirit who enables us to worship and to love.

And when the Spirit takes us, moulds us, shapes us, then gradually we become together more Christ-like. And then we are equipped to fulfil Christ's command to make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded.

I want to finish with just a few words from John's gospel, chapter 17. And in this passage, Jesus is praying for his disciples, and he's praying to the Father. And I want you to listen to this and imagine that this is Christ Jesus's prayer for us together and for each one of you individually: 'I will remain in the world no longer, but they are still in the world. and I'm coming to you. Holy Father, protect them by the power of your name, the name that you gave me, so that they may be one, as we are one. My prayer is not for them alone, I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message that all of them may be one, father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one, as we are one, I in them and you in me, so that they may be brought to complete unity. Then the world will know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.'

And then the fulfilment of the prayer; Jesus says 'Father, I want those that you have given me to be with me, where I am, and to see my glory, the glory that you have given me because you love me, before the creation of the world.' The prayer of our God, the prayer of Jesus Christ, because he loves us and commands us to love one another in his name. Amen.