

TRINITY SUNDAY 16 June 2019

A Homily preached by the Reverend Roger B. White, Rector of St Andrew's Parish, Kent, Connecticut

Proverbs 8.1-4, 21-31; Psalm 8; Romans 5.1-5; John 16.12-15

In addition to being Fathers' Day, today is also the Sunday after the Day of Pentecost and so Trinity Sunday. The long-practiced convention of the Church is that if a priest can find someone else to preach on this, the only day of the Church Year that is about neither a person nor an event but rather about a doctrine, the priest finds that someone. Usually her or she is the greenest of the curates because older priest already know –What do you say about the inexpressible ...? How do you explain the inexplicable, the doctrine of the Holy and Undivided Trinity, one God in Three Persons ...?

We are fortunate that, as the build-up to today, we have since Easter been hearing from John's Gospel, and from my point of view John's is the Gospel that makes the most sense out of who the Trinity is, in particular who the Holy Spirit is We can pretty much understand who God the Father, the Creator is; we can more or less understand God the Incarnate Son as the Redeemer; but the Holy Spirit, the Sanctifier, can prove more difficult to grasp. And this is where John's Gospel helps.

Over the past couple of weeks our Gospel readings have been from what we call the 'Farewell Discourse' in John's Gospel –that is, from what Jesus says to his closest followers at the conclusion of the Last Supper, when he begins to earnestly prepare them for what it will be like when they no longer see him or hear him as they have been seeing and hearing him for the past couple of years. He tells them about what their lives will be after he returns to the Father in the Ascension.

And today we hear him say to them, 'I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now'. You cannot even hear them now, because your minds are racing. You have not yet really caught on to who I am, why I am doing as I do.

You see, the disciples are worried and scared because they are aware of how hostile Jerusalem is becoming to Jesus and his followers since their triumphant entry into the city only a few days earlier on Palm Sunday. The authorities –the Temple leadership and the Roman soldiers urged on by the Temple leadership— are closing in, and we need to remember that the Crucifixion is about to happen, on the morning after the Last Supper. It is no wonder that the disciples are confused and terrified, and Jesus knows that although he has more to tell them, they cannot 'bear' it –they are incapable of taking it in—now. And on last Sunday, we in an earlier bit of the 'Farewell Discourse' heard Jesus tell them, 'the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything and remind you of all that I have said to you'.

And that, in John's Gospel, is the role of the Spirit. In the future, the disciples will no longer hear and see Jesus as before; and we ourselves, as followers of the Way, have never seen or heard Jesus as his first followers did. But the Spirit still comes to us as it did to them, to remind

them, now us, of what it is that Jesus teaches in his words and actions in the Gospels. He is the example of who all human beings have the call to be. He preaches love and kindness and generosity towards everyone. He heals wherever he can. And he insists on the reality of Resurrection, that our lives in this world are, like his own, always about change, about moving into new worlds, about new ways of thinking and being, always proclaiming the love of God and making that love not only known but felt.

This is what Jesus did in countless ways, with myriad examples, and the Holy Spirit seeks to come to each and every one of us, to encourage us to live our lives as Jesus lived his, to pattern our lives after his, extending love, generosity, compassion, kindness, and self-sacrifice to those around us. The Holy Spirit comes in order to remind us who Jesus is, what he said and did.

And so the invitation on this morning is for us to be open to the movement of the Spirit in our lives, to how it may push us, unch us, draw us, beckon and urge us into new and changed lives. The invitation is to be open to the Spirit remaking what we think and say and do so that we are more and more like Jesus himself, making the spirit of Jesus, the love of God, known and felt by our fellow human beings, by the Creatures of God around us.

This Trinity Sunday morning we hear our dismissal to go out into the world from this place and to be who God calls us to be, to love as we are called to love, indeed to bless as we must bless the world around us. Amen.