

Sermon Evensong Trinity Sunday Year A 2023

One of the key starting points for all Christian theology is the idea that every human being is made in the image and likeness of God. In the very first chapter of Genesis we read, *So God created man in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.* We are all – the entire human family - impressed, stamped, with the image of God. Psalm 145 we sang tonight, and then the reading from Isaiah, both remind us of the magnificence of the Creator, and by extension the dignity of his creation. The sorry human story is really the story of how slow and reluctant we have been to recognize this.

In the particular revelation of God in Jesus Christ, we come to know who this Creator God is. In Jesus, God chooses a face for himself. In Jesus we are shown how God can be known, encountered, loved and adored. In this revelation, God is shown to be Trinity. So, if we are God's, if we bear his image by his gift of creation, it is, then, a Trinitarian image. Trinity Sunday is a celebration of the image and mark with which we, as Christians are impressed with. Trinity shows us whose we and who we are. We are *people* of the Trinity. We *belong* to the Trinity. The Trinity shows us both our origin and our destiny. And Trinity is to shape our life here and now.

This is why - in obedience to Christ's own command - we are baptised in the Name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. This is how the image of the God revealed in Jesus is impressed upon us. We become Christian literally by water being poured in the name of Triune God. Now, perhaps we consider the waters of baptism to be something a soothing bath. Instead, we should see baptism as a branding, a searing tattoo even! Water poured in the Name of Trinity brands us, indelibly marks us, *for* the Trinity. The image we bear is the image of the Triune God. And we bear this image so that we can know God, love and adore him. And we do this most perfectly in our worship. The worship we partake of here on earth simply anticipates the eternal worship of the Triune God in heaven.

This is why every act of true Christian worship invokes the Name of the Trinity. Father, Son and Holy Spirit *is* God's name. It is that Name by which we gather. It is in that Name we have the authority and confidence to act. And it means that when we invoke the Holy Name of the eternal, Triune God there ought to be a certain solemnity and seriousness in what we attempt to do in that Name. Not sombre and morose (for which seriousness and solemnity now so often gets confused). Our faith still inspires joy!

But when we invoke the name of God in worship it is *not* for a social catch-up, or for a community-building exercise or even for instruction. No. Our worship is an attempt - even if falteringly and imperfectly - to peer past the cherubim and seraphim, to the very throne of God. Because of God's gift of himself in Jesus Christ, and in power of the Holy Spirit, God steps past the curtain. He comes to us. He visits us, here and now. He deigns to actually listen to our prayers. When we say, *God come to us*, he comes! We invoke his Name - the name of Blessed, Holy and Undivided Trinity - and he shows himself to us. Precisely *because* we are his. Because we bear his mark and are impressed with his image. Because we belong to him.

So, to ignore, suppress or compromise faith in the Trinity, is to ignore, suppress and compromise the very heart and soul of Christian identity. To try and subvert the fullness of Trinitarian faith is an attempt to scrub out the mark we bear. Subverting Trinitarian faith shows itself by trying to cover up the image impressed on us. The consistent feature of all the heresies that have sought to undermine orthodox faith is that they all have an impoverished Trinitarian theology. They have all proved themselves remarkably resilient! They keep reappearing, even in our day and age. But whether the Arians, Docetics, Nestorians, Adoptionists, Marcionites, Donatists, Pelagianists or Gnostics they all fall on this: a failure to apprehend the radical implications of the Trinity. All the substitutes and all the alternatives to orthodox Christian faith fail to accept the true cost of the image we bear.

The great Mystery we recall today is not some obscure bit of medieval philosophising. Trinity is not some complicating add-on to a pure and simple (but now lost) primitive faith. It is of *the very essence* of what it means to be a Christian because it is of the very essence of God! This cannot be overstated enough! It is the fruit of the church's sustained reflection on the revelation of Jesus Christ and of trust in the Holy Spirit who would *lead to all truth*. The long story of the creeds and councils of the church is in large measure the story of illuminating and preserving Trinitarian faith.

Christians need not be fearful of this defining mystery. It is not a problem to be solved but a truth to be experienced. The Trinity is the mark of what makes us Christian. It is the mark we remind ourselves of each time we baptise, each time we pray, each time we gather in worship. Each time we even make the simple sign of the Cross and invoke the Holy Name of God, we bear witness to the image we bear. And in this image we show whose we are and who we are. Amen.