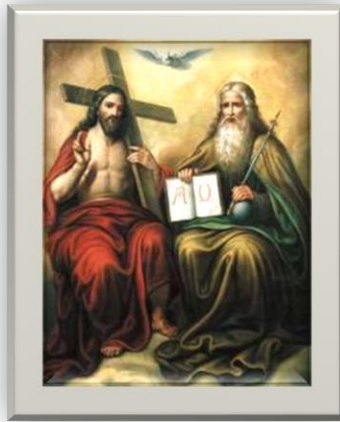


Worship at home

May 30, 2021

Trinity Sunday



<http://stpeterstoronto.ca/main/index.php/2019/06/15/in-the-name-of-the-father-and-of-the-son-and-of-the-holy-spirit-holy-trinity-sunday/>

God calls us to worship:

Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts;
the whole earth is full of his glory.

Let us worship God.

Hymn: #299 “Holy, holy, holy”
(Judy Armstrong and Marilyn Shaw)

We bring our praise and confessions:

God of Mystery and Mercy,
Father, Son and Holy Spirit,
we meet you in wonder as the Blessed Trinity.
You are the Ancient of Days, eternal and unchanging;
yet you are the Source of each new day, renewing all things.
In Christ, you encounter us in whatever each day brings
with a heart that beats in love for us.
Through the Spirit, you breathe life into what is growing older,
energizing us to serve you in good times and hard times.
In the mystery of the Trinity, you are always with us
and so, we bring you our worship and praise
to join in your dance of life and love,
Holy One and Holy Three, now and ever more.

Holy and Healing God,
slow to anger and swift to forgive,
you have shown us the depth of your love day by day,
yet we are reluctant to love others even a little.
You have shown us compassion and forgiveness,
yet we turn away from one another for even small slights.
We save our concern for those most like us.
Forgive us.
Create in us clean hearts and a desire to begin again
with you and with one another.
Give us the courage to forgive each other and know your healing grace.¹

God assures us of his forgiveness:

Remember these words from St. Paul:
From now on we regard no one from a human point of view.
If anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation.
Everything old has passed away. See, everything has become new!
Thanks be to God that we can all make a new start
through God's gift of forgiveness and peace!

**In response to the gospel,
we confess our faith and offer our lives and resources:**

Please remember to prayerfully make your offerings to the congregation of which you are most associated. If you're a member/adherent of Knox-Moore or St. Andrew's, Mooretown, please send your offering to Howard McKellar or Judy Armstrong.

God speaks to us through his Word:

¹ From worship resource for May 30, 2021 available at <https://presbyterian.ca/worship>

No Empty Words

Today marks a turning point in the Christian year. All the major feasts have been celebrated. We rejoiced with the shepherds at the birth of Jesus, wondered with John at the edge of the Jordan River, knelt with our Lord's mother at the foot of his cross, puzzled with the women at the empty tomb, sat behind locked doors with the frightened disciples, knelt in awe as the Christ ascended his throne, and listened to the Holy Spirit inspiring Peter to preach.

Now the church steps back, breathes, and learns anew what it all means for our daily living.

Today marks the beginning of the long season of Pentecost (or, often called Ordinary Time) which lasts until the start of Advent. This is the time to learn to live by the Holy Spirit as we seek to bear witness to the truth of Jesus in ways that are consistent with that truth.

To launch us into this season, we're going to move back in time about 2,700 years, travel across the ocean, and enter the Jerusalem temple where the prophet Isaiah stands before the throne of God.

READ ISAIAH 6:1-8.

1. This passage describes Isaiah's commissioning as a prophet of the Lord. It includes this vision which is a theophany – a visible manifestation of the Divine. We're not given any detail about the Lord's appearance. That remains in the realm of mystery. We are, however, encouraged to read these words with awe. The Lord sitting on the throne is majestic indeed.

And, like any monarch who has attendants to wait upon them, the Lord is surrounded by his own heavenly courtiers. The seraphs. The seraphs themselves recognize they are in the presence of Holy Mystery. One set of wings covers their faces so they would not look directly upon God. One set of wings covers their feet. And one set allows them to move. With their voice, they proclaim the holiness of the One seated on the throne.

Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory.

Isaiah's mouth is purified so that he can then spend his days proclaiming the Word of the Lord. He can go amongst the people of Israel and bear witness to them of the truth of the invisible yet living Lord God – his sovereignty, his compassion, and his way.

We worship a God who is living, and who is holy. Who cannot be seen, yet whose power exceeds anything we can imagine. We belong to a God who invites us to join Him, to experience his love, and to live within his mission to this world.

Much of the Christian life, the life of discipleship, is learning to listen for this particular God's word and to respond, "Here I am, send me!"

If you read the rest of chapter 6, you'll learn that Isaiah's task would not be an easy one! The Lord sent him to speak to a people who didn't care, who wouldn't listen, and, who would, in time, be overtaken by the nations not loyal to Yahweh and be exiled.

The book of Isaiah is a big one that covers the time before the exile, during the exile, and the beginning of the restoration of Israel. At the other end of the book, from chapter 40, we begin to catch some glimmer of hope in the prophet's speeches. It seems like, maybe, their time in exile is coming to an end. In Isaiah 55 we read these words:

READ ISAIAH 55:6-11.

...so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty...

2. Although God transcends our understanding; the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is nevertheless at work in the world. And this triune God has chosen to reveal himself to us through words. What began as an oral tradition disseminated by prophets and in stories told around campfires, was in time written down. The written words have been preserved, canonized, translated, and passed on in the pages of Scripture, the Holy Bible.

On Pentecost we celebrated the gift of the Holy Spirit and noted the relation between the ministry of the Holy Spirit and the Law given to Israel long before their exile.

Living by the Holy Spirit such that we bear witness to the truth of Jesus in ways consistent with that truth, cannot be separated from living the Word of God.

(*For video and Zoom: refer to Power Point)

3. The Presbyterian Church in Canada's statement of faith, *Living Faith*, describes the Bible as:

- given to us to be our rule of faith and life,
 - reveals God on God's terms
 - meet the invisible, living, triune God as the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit wishes to reveal himself to us
 - reveals God's idea of righteousness
- the standard of all doctrine,
 - against which we test any word/idea that comes to us
 - ex. Suppose you get the idea that eating meat is an unrighteous practice. You then look to Scripture and learn that, in the beginning God created all the plants to grow for food. You then conclude that you are right; vegetarianism is the only option for righteousness. However, you keep reading and discover that, after the Fall, God made some concessions and allowed people to eat certain kinds of meat under certain conditions. You then have to make a choice.
 - Living by the Holy Spirit therefore involves a choice of discipleship: whether or not we will accept the result, and, how we will accept the result.
- necessary, sufficient, and reliable to reveal Jesus Christ,
 - reveals the sovereignty and kindness; the justice and grace; the call for obedience and the patient compassion of Jesus
 - reveals his Spirit-conceived birth, his sacrifice on our behalf, his bodily resurrection, his ascent to the throne of heaven and earth
 - Because God chose to reveal himself in words that make up Holy Scripture, the Word of God can be trusted to accomplish that which God purposes; namely, salvation in and by Jesus.

*...the sacred writings ... are able to **instruct you for salvation** through faith in Christ Jesus. All scripture is inspired by God and is*

*useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, so that everyone who belongs to God may be proficient, equipped for every good work.*²

- written within communities of faith
 - There is historical and corporate precedent. Behind all the writings are human lives, names, struggles, and joys. This isn't a book that was written by someone in an office. It is a varied collection of writings that are each the product of extensive experience living in the mystery of the intersection of earthly and heavenly glory and affirmed by the experiences of others.
 - Think of it: From Abraham (never mind all the people before Abraham to Adam) to John of Patmos (the author of Revelation) are 2,300 years of living! We are in the year 2021 A.D. The written testimony of Scripture covers more time, history, and experience than we have been counting years!
 - these generations of communities have accepted these words as Scripture, in addition to all the communities of faith of the past 2,000 years. Over 4,000 years of communal affirmation that these words are the Word of the Living God!
 - conditioned by language, setting, thought of the communities in which they were written
 - therefore, Scripture is read in its historical context
 - this is where living the Word of God becomes complicated

There are no empty words in Scripture. But to live them rightly we need help!

- interpreted and lived *in reliance on the Holy Spirit* who guides us into all the truth

4. What I want to do over the next four weeks (excluding June 20th when I will be away) is explore what it means to live the Word of God in reliance on the Holy Spirit.

² 2nd Timothy 3:15-17

How can we live the Word of God in reliance on the Holy Spirit?

We'll look at four holy habits to help us rely on the Holy Spirit as we try to live the Word of God:

1. Hearing the Word of God.

Note: I said 'hearing.'

It goes beyond simply reading the text on the page. Much of the writings were first transmitted orally. Even the letters and maybe even the gospels would have been read aloud within the congregation at worship. Most of the members of the communities of faith would have *heard* the Word rather than read it.

Whether you read the text on the page or listen to a recording or listen to someone else reading, we need to come to Scripture listening.

When you read, you're in charge; when you listen, you receive.

What the Bible says, how it says it, the place of metaphor

2. Meditation.

Biblical meditation, Christian meditation, is not what you might expect when you think of the word in terms of other spiritualities and how it is often used in our culture. While visions and mystical experiences are not unheard of in the Judeo-Christian tradition (as we just read from Isaiah 6; and, we have an entire book that is a vision - Revelation), they are not the norm and they are not the goal of meditating on God's Word.

3. Prayer and how it relates to living God's Word in reliance on the Holy Spirit.

4. Choice of discipleship/choice of obedience.

If this series of sermons piques your interest and inspires your heart, a good resource is Eugene Peterson's book *Eat this Book*. This is not a biblical commentary nor is it an intense work of theology. It is an exploration of what Peterson calls "spiritual reading." By that he simply means, reading the Bible as God intends us to: to know God – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit – as God reveals himself; to know ourselves; and to live God's mission in our day.

When I was inducted into the Moore Pastoral Charge, the Rev. Keith McKee gave the charge at the close of the service. He spoke from 1st Samuel 3: “The word of the Lord was rare in those days.” As we look with cautious hope towards the end of the COVID pandemic as we learn how to live by the Holy Spirit whether in exile or in the Promised Land, as we learn to spread the news that despite appearances to the contrary, God is in the land, let it not be said of us that “the word of the Lord was rare in those days.” The words of the Triune Mystery are not empty words. They accomplish that which He purposes, they succeed in the thing for which He sent them. By them He renews the face of the earth. Amen.

We respond with faith and service:

Lord, our God,
whose power is beyond compare
with glory beyond our understanding;
whose mercy is boundless, and love for us is endless;
look upon us in your compassion.

For peace that calms our hearts and saves our souls,
and for peace throughout creation,
make our prayers your own.

Lord, have mercy.

For the stability of the church and the unity of this congregation,
for all who desire to follow you with faith and reverence,
and for the ministries of your church around the world
in these challenging times,
make our prayers your own.

Lord, have mercy.

For our country, our leaders, and all those in public service
(names may be added as you say this)
for this city, and for every city and nation,
and for all who offer themselves with diligence and compassion
as months of pandemic stretch on,
make our prayers your own.

Lord, have mercy.

For the Indigenous people in Canada,
for the nurturing of relationships between cultures and communities,
for healing of old hurts and for repentance and reconciliation,
for new and better ways to walk with one another in respect and care,
make our prayers your own.

Lord, have mercy.

For the safety of those who must travel by land, sea, and air,
for those who long to travel but cannot,
and for all those who are separated from those they love,
make our prayers your own.

Lord, have mercy.

For the sick, the suffering, and the isolated,
for victims of violence, refugees and captives,
and for our protection against all affliction, danger, and distress,
make our prayers your own.

Lord, have mercy.

To you, Holy God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit,

belongs all glory, honour and worship,
now and forever, and to the ages of ages.
Hear us now as we pray in the words that Jesus taught us:

The Lord's Prayer

Hymn: #471 "We are one in the Spirit"
(Judy Armstrong and Marilyn Shaw)

God sends us with His blessing: