

Trinity Sunday – 30th May 2021

Psalms 148, 149 and 150; Isaiah 6: 1 - 8 and Matthew 3: 13 - 17

Praise the Lord! Praise God in his sanctuary; praise him in the mighty firmament! Let everything that breathes praise the Lord! Praise the Lord! Psalm 150: 1 and 6

And one called to another (seraphs) and said: 'Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is filled with his glory.' Isaiah 6: 3

And when Jesus had been baptised, just as he came up from the water, suddenly the heavens were opened to him and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him. And a voice from heaven said, 'This is my Son, the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased'. Matthew 3: 16 and 17

Almighty and Everlasting God, who hast given unto us thy servants grace, by the confession of true faith, to acknowledge the glory of the eternal Trinity, and in the power of the Divine Majesty to worship the Unity: We beseech thee that thou wouldest keep us steadfast in this faith, and evermore defend us from all adversities; who livest and reignest, one God, world without end. Amen. Collect for Trinity Sunday

We thought last week about the way in which Creation works in harmony with God and is so in tune with His Will that it groans with eagerness or dismay at present circumstances, longing for completion and perfection to be restored. Creation points us to God in all its grandeur and miniscule detail and is a picture of how the Holy Spirit is constantly renewing people's lives either as they are redeemed and become Christians, or as our lives are refreshed in our long walks of discipleship; as the natural world round us is in perpetual flux and rebirth, so our spiritual lives are not static.

That theme continues today as we see in Psalm 150 how everything that breathes praises God. The reading from Isaiah 6 gives us another glimpse of an aspect of Creation about which we know little, because we are currently earth-bound and have only Biblical accounts of visions of heaven like this one in Isaiah, or people like Ezekiel, Daniel or John who were also given visions. Isaiah attempts to describe the seraphs with their six wings flying about, acting as messengers and praising God. Their call is interesting, because they cry out that the whole earth is full of God's glory – underlining the thought that Creation is an advertisement or promise from God. It reveals His greatness and points to the future, a reminder or guarantee that we need to watch and wait for Jesus to return. Just as each member of the Trinity was involved in the initial creative process described in Genesis, so each member continues to work in complementary ways into eternity future.

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The other phrase in the seraphs' calls is to continuously announce God's holiness, which we traditionally think about on Trinity Sunday, and which we clearly see in Isaiah's own experience. With his exposure to the environment of heaven, he is immediately struck with his own sense of sin and unworthiness, hence one of the seraph's cleansing his lips with the live coal. Only when this has happened is he ready for his commission to be sent as a prophet.

Our other reading, from Matthew chapter three, takes us to the banks of the River Jordan and the baptism of Jesus. We see John the Baptist's recognition of Jesus as not needing to be baptised because he had no sins to confess or symbolically be washed clean. Jesus clearly wanted to be seen to be obedient to the requirements of the Law, and give divine endorsement to the validity of John's calling to preach repentance of sins and the need for baptism. It is at this point that the Trinitarian aspect of the event becomes apparent because, as Jesus is raised from the water (a picture of his own future Easter resurrection), the Holy Spirit descends like a dove and rests on Jesus, and the voice from heaven declares, 'This is my Son, my Beloved, with whom I am well pleased'.

This is a truly momentous occasion as the three members of the Trinity are seen (or heard) acting in concert at the launch of Jesus' ministry of teaching and healing. Indeed, this 'beginning' moves straight into the forty days in the desert where Jesus is led by the Spirit and is tempted by Satan, to hone and refine his sense of calling.

Our Collect for today acknowledges the grace enabling us to understand and express through our confession of faith (such as declaring the words of the Creed) to acknowledge the glory of the eternal Trinity. We pray we might worship the Unity, in that we accept the individual members of the Trinity, but they have complete harmony and unity as one God. As the 1647 Westminster Larger Catechism puts it in question 9: *How many persons are there in the Godhead?*

A9: There be three persons in the Godhead, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; and these three are one true, eternal God, the same in substance, equal in power and glory; although distinguished by their personal properties.

We pray with our Collect that we may remain steadfast in this faith and be preserved from all adversities - the doubts and temptations that Jesus himself faced and overcame in the desert.

Kevin Boak

Lay Reader