

SERMON: How Can We Experience the Trinity? Proverbs 8.1-4, 22-31; Psalm 8; Romans 5.1-5; John 16.12-15

Almighty God, may we always seek a deeper understanding of your true nature. May we draw ever closer to you through the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen

Last Sunday we celebrated the wondrous gift of the Holy Spirit coming dramatically into the world. This was a gift which gave the first disciples the power to spread the gospel message and continues to do so for Christians in all ages. Today, on this Trinity Sunday, we have the opportunity to explore more deeply the source of that power through our relationship with the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit. On an intellectual level the concept of a Three in One God can be pretty challenging. Yet each of our readings provide insight into how we may experience the fullness of our God. And I suggest that it is from our personal experience with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit that comes the deepest and most enduring wisdom.

As we all know, to build relationships with anyone you need to get to know them, spend time with them, talk to them, do things together with them. So I'm going to look at each of our readings today from that perspective: How can we experience the Trinity through deepening our relationship with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit?

Psalm 8



I couldn't resist starting with this image of the night sky above our very own church. Who knows what that amazing star is?

Ok, now imagine the countless millions of real stars in the heavens above our church. Psalm 8 reminds us that we can encounter the glory of God, the Father through the moon and stars and everything in the universe that He has created. We are also reminded that we have a role to play in His creation. The almighty Creator cares about each one of us so much that he has made us only a little lower in standing to Himself and given us authority over the “work of His hands.’ Any reflection on that statement can only reveal how truly amazing it is!

Proverbs 8

Now I invite us to be drawn into the blue heavens above St Michael’s. As you soar upwards and out into the universe if you travelled about 7,000 light years away you could witness this event.



Image Credit: NASA, ESA, and the Hubble Heritage Team (STScI/AURA)

This NASA image is called the ***Pillars of Creation***. It is a photograph taken by the Hubble Space Telescope that depicts elephant trunks of interstellar gas and dust in the Eagle Nebula of the Serpens constellation, some 6,500–7,000 light-years from Earth. They are so named because the gas and dust are in the process of creating new stars, while also being eroded by the light from nearby stars that have recently formed.

However, the name is also based on a phrase used by Charles Spurgeon in his 1857 sermon "The Condescension of Christ".

In it, Spurgeon uses the phrase to convey not only the physical world but also the force that keeps it all together, emanating from the divine: He says of the birth of Christ: *"And now wonder, ye angels, the Infinite has become an infant; he, upon whose shoulders the universe doth hang, hangs at his mother's breast; He who created all things, and bears up the pillars of creation, hath now become so weak, that He must be carried by a woman!"*

The concept of the pillars of creation – the very foundations that hold up the world and all that is in it – reverberates significantly in the Christian tradition. In light of that tradition, many theologians take our reading from Proverbs 8 to refer to the role the divine Jesus had in co-creating the universe with His father. This is a theme that is imbued throughout the gospel of John. Indeed, the opening verses tell us: *"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All Things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being..."*

So what is one way can we experience God, our Father and His Son? Turn to the creation. Admire and give thanks for their handiwork in the beautiful flowers in your garden, for the wonderful pet in your home, for your loving family and friends, for the stunning mountains, rivers, oceans, moon and stars. Give our Dad and His Son the praise for their majestic care of all creation and let us take our responsibility to properly steward it with them.

John 16.12-15



Turning now to our gospel reading I liked this image because for me it connects the Holy Spirit with the Father and the Son through the glory of their Autumn creation. A magnificent season we get to enjoy every year in Canberra!

In these short verses we are told that the Holy Spirit guides us into all the truth. ‘ALL the truth’ means the total revelation that comes through Jesus Christ and is not just limited to theological truth. Just as Jesus the Son testifies and gives glory to His Father, so does the Holy Spirit testify and give glory to Jesus.

William Barclay makes some insightful and challenging points about the nature of the Father’s revelation through Jesus.

First, revelation is a progressive process. God can only reveal to us what we are ready and able to receive. As we grow in our relationship with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit we also grow in our ability to understand the truth of Jesus. This is expressed in verses 12 and 13: *“I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth; for he will not speak on his own, but will speak whatever he hears, and he will declare to you the things that are to come.”*

Second, the fact that revelation is progressive has two particular consequences. Barclay suggests that it explains why there are parts of the Old Testament that cause Christians worry and distress. *“The people of the Old Testament times had grasped a great truth, but they had only grasped one side, one bit of it. Revelation has to be that way; God can only reveal as much as a person can understand.”*

And the other consequence is that there is no end to the gift of God’s revelation. Barclay argues that *“It is true that God’s supreme and unsurpassable revelation came in Jesus Christ; but Jesus is not a figure in a book, He is a living person, and in Him God’s revelation goes on. God is still leading us into a greater and greater realization of what Jesus means. God is not a God who spoke up to 120AD and who is now silent. God is still revealing His truth to men.”*

So what is one way we can experience the Holy Spirit? Let us earnestly and continually ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to us deeper understandings of the truth given to us through Jesus. May our capacity to accept His truth never cease to grow as we trust and obey our Lord.

Romans 5.1-5



Our Romans 5 reading brings together all three aspects of our God. It is a beautiful description of what it can mean for our individual lives when we have faith in Jesus.

First, we gain a peace with our Father. These are not just words. It is an experience we each can and do have. So even in the midst of suffering and hardship it is possible to stay close to God. This does not mean that suffering is right or must happen, but it does mean that if and when it may happen we can rest in the assurance of God's hope. This is the hope of our Father's mission of salvation being fulfilled. It is the hope that through the grace of Jesus the sins of all humanity have been forgiven. This hope is sure and certain and will never disappoint us because it is built on a rock solid foundation. That foundation is our Father's love for each and every person He created!

Verse 5 declares: *"and hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us."*

Again these are not just words. As followers of Jesus, we can be and are given the blessed gift of the deep, deep love that our Father holds for us. The Father, Son and Holy Spirit work seamlessly and tirelessly together to pour that love into our hearts; we have but to ask them for it.

As I conclude, if you would like a fresh experience of their love then I invite you now to repeat this prayer after me:

In the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit I stand in the grace and truth of Jesus

Come Holy Spirit come,

Pour your love into my heart until it is overflowing

Come holy Spirit, come Amen