

## Holy Trinity Sunday June 12 2022

### John 16:12-15

Who are you?

It's a vital question. One which echoes through movies (I'm Batman, Bond...James Bond). It also echoes through our own lives ...How many of us still struggle with that sense of identity, who am I?

We have our names, I'm Brian, or Karen, or Dan. That's a start. But, even with a name there needs to be something more. A narrative that attaches to it. When you don't have that, you just get blank stares (think Starlord at the beginning of Guardians of the Galaxy).

But when you have that narrative, then the name has meaning, context, you know who it is you are talking about.

The same is true for God.

For Jews, the name of God is so sacred they don't speak it. That name is given in scripture, when Moses asks for it so that he can respond if asked by the enslaved Jews in Egypt which God is it that has sent Moses to free them. The answer is a variation on the Hebrew word for "to be". It is translated, "I am who I am", "I am what I am" or simply... "I am"

While nice, it really doesn't do much. It doesn't give much information about this God who is I Am. So, it gets linked within the Hebrew Scriptures with a more descriptive formula- This is the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The God who brought us out of the Land of Egypt. Now we're getting somewhere. Because

Jews knew the stories of those people. And because they knew the stories, they knew something of the character of this God. Who was an active part of those stories. Who called ordinary people to do extraordinary things. Who stayed true to them even when they messed up. Who called them to difficult and seemingly impossible things for the sake of not only themselves, but of the world. Oh, that God!

We, as Christians do the same thing.

We have a name for God. God. But those listening might not know that it is capital "G" God not lowercase "g" god. Or, rightfully, ask, which God is this?

Our response. God who is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Oh! That God.

Because within that understanding, Father, Son, Holy Spirit, are stories. Ones just as descriptive of who God is as the ones the Israelites used.

First and foremost, God is known through Jesus. God's best self-expression to us. God's best way of saying, here is who I am. Jesus says in John that he and the Father are one (10:30) and that through him you hear the words of the Father and have seen the works of the Father (14:10). What Jesus speaks and does are who God is. Express God's character.

Jesus then goes on to tell us other things about God. That the unseen, but not unfelt, presence of God will come to us after Jesus goes. God's Spirit- that will give us speech, and courage, and passion, and strength. All those things we talked about last week.

What the naming of God as Trinity; Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, leads to is a narrative. A story. That give us an understanding of the character of this God, who God is and what God does.

Such that people can hear and understand. What God do you worship again? God who is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Oh, that God! Got it.

At the core of the Trinitarian understanding of God is relationship. Within Godself, but also with us, with all of creation.

Here too, is something we can grasp. For we can understand relationship, can't we? We know about those. Who God is is defined by relationship. One Jesus talks about as Father to Son, Son to Father, Breath to Word, Speaker to Word to Breath. Our reading from John today gives us a taste of the simplicity and complexity of this. Right? Simplicity because we get a father/son relationship. Parent to child. Because we know the burning of passion, the impulse of spirit. And the complexity of those relationships.

And there is mystery. The Hebrew name of God as I Am is both descriptive and obscure. It is clear (I exist, I am.. is verbally the beginning of all sentences that describe) and mystery at the same time (I am...what?). This continues in the way we as Christians understand God- Father, Son, Holy Spirit in relationship with us and within God's own being. How exactly does this work? It's a mystery.

In both cases we as humans can try and break it down, but the reality is that we can never fully grasp who God is. To do so we ourselves would need to be God because the totality of God is so far beyond what we can grasp.

So, instead, we cling to what we can know. The story, the relationship. Jesus.

We know the character of who God is through God's Son, Jesus. Come in the flesh, something we can grasp, hear, touch. A sign of God's love and willingness to sacrifice for our good. For the wellbeing of God's creation. We can get what that kind of love would mean. In the Holy Spirit we know that God's love and sacrifice for us is not a one and done thing, but an ongoing relationship. An active interest in our lives. In our well-being. Every part of it.

We know who God is as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit because we know about relationships.

We know that good, fulfilling, life-giving relationships take a lot of work, don't we? That it requires listening to understand as well as speaking. It requires working together, knowing the gifts and abilities of each person in the relationship. At their best, relationships are like a dance, aren't they? One where each person knows the steps and they move together in that intricate dance that take you from point a to point b. I had a member talk about needing to learn the "dance" that happened to get their parent, with some physical limitations, from the house to the car. The way in which to easily and efficiently move them from one place to another.

Pastor's dread Holy Trinity Sunday. First, it's hard to preach on a theme like this. Second, we don't want to speak heresy or lead you into one. I don't like it because the Trinity is one of those things where no matter how hard I butt my intellect against it I just don't get it.

But, I believe that the Trinitarian understanding of who God is is an essential part of the Christian faith. I don't understand the way in which it works, but I do

believe that God is one, and that God in Jesus Christ has identified Godself as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

I believe that, because the character of this God is consistent with that of the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The God who freed the Israelites from bondage in Egypt. The God who throughout the Hebrew Bible keeps reaching out for a relationship with humanity. To save us from ourselves.

This is the same God who came in Jesus. Who loved us enough to come in human form to experience all that being human means, including death, so that we might be freed from bondage to both death and sin and all the hurtful ways in which we seek to stave off both. That we might enter into loving relationship with God and with each other. This is the very definition of what it means to be a follower of Jesus. To love God with all that we are and to love one another in the same way God in Jesus loves us. Do you hear the dance of relationship there? One that moves between the partners of God and us and us to each other.

And it is in this relationship that we know God. It is a relationship that can be dangerous, that requires grace, trust, hope. But also one that is life giving, freeing. That makes us greater than anything we can possibly be on our own.

A whole that is greater than the sum of its parts. Which might be a way to think about God.

Who is God? God as Father, creator, so far above us and beyond us it can be terrifying if you really think about it. God as Jesus, one of us- but different. Loving, caring, healing, teaching. God as the fresh breath of wind blowing through us. God continuing to transform us, inspire us, guide us to love one another.

This is the God we follow. The God we worship. The one around whom we gather and base our lives. The one in whom we trust. And who we name:

Father, Son, and Holy Spirit Thanks be to God.

<https://www.1517.org/articles/the-trinity-is-history?fbclid=IwAR0khQH7UAv9oNJpHS1w-5p3JeELaEhpJYJ8gaj9GLMQt8z4EWvp-blZYt8>