

## TRINITY SUNDAY 2022

John 16:12-15

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Imagine you've just been asked to work in your dream job. The pay is spectacular, the benefits are for all of your life. The people you work with are the creme de la creme, the hours fit perfectly with your stage of life. Your work culture is one of permission giving, empowering, freedom to be yourself, power to do what inspires you. Your dream job will support you to see you thrive not only in your work but in your family, hobbies, and your faith. You can take holidays whenever you like, but work is so good you wouldn't even want a holiday. Would you want to get in on that? Doesn't that sound amazing?

Today we're looking at an offer that is even better than this impossibly amazing dream job! Today we are looking at the truth that God is love, and you are invited in. The Creator, the being at the centre of the cosmos, invites you to join in his life. It is better than the best offer you've ever received!

Today is Trinity Sunday. This is the traditional Church calendar. Trinity Sunday comes after seeing Jesus born at Christmas, the incarnate Son of God. He is revealed in January and February. Lent leads into his crucifixion and death for us. At Easter we Celebrate his resurrection. He ascends back to the Father's side a few weeks later and then the Spirit is poured out at Pentecost. Then comes Trinity Sunday to say, "Oh, I see. We've looked at Jesus who always claimed to be God the Son, the Son of the Father God, and who promised His Spirit which has now been poured out. So, in response to this revelation, who is the God we worship? He is Trinity."

I'm sure most of you are Trinitarians. The Trinity is so simple that anyone who has prayed to the Father in the name of Jesus is a trinitarian. We recognise that our prayers go to the Father in the name of Jesus, in his power, in his relationship with the father. If you have invited the Spirit to live in you, and you have a sense that that means Jesus lives in you, then you're trinitarian. If you recognise that when you look at Jesus, you see God, then you're trinitarian.

The Trinity is not a maths problem for us to solve. The Trinity is the simple fact that God is love. And Jesus is our way into that love.

On the night before He died, Jesus pulled back the curtain and let us glimpse the eternal life of God.

Jesus claimed to be the Son of God. He was always the Son of a Father, and he was filled with the Spirit of God. And at Pentecost Jesus poured out His Spirit into the believers.

Well, in John 17:24 He prays for us.

**He says, "Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am, and to see my glory, the glory you have given me because you loved me before the creation of the world."**

He pulls back that curtain on eternity. "Father, you loved me before the creation of the world." Before anything else was made, God the Father loved Jesus, the Son. Jesus said, that there was a time before the world. And in that time there was the Father loving His Son.

We see evidence of this throughout the Bible. So, if you start at the very beginning, in Genesis 1 there is a plurality to God. Verse 1, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters." You have God and the Spirit of God.

Then when God created humanity he said, "**Let us make humanity in our image, in our likeness...**" (Genesis 1:26).

Or picture Jesus' Baptism. In Luke 3, (or Mark 1 or Matthew 3) when Jesus is baptised by John he is immersed in the water and as he comes out heaven opens and the Spirit of God descends on Him like a dove. And a voice from heaven said, "You are my Son, whom I love, with You I am well pleased." In this image we see an eternal snapshot of God. The Father has forever been loving His Son in the joy and unity of the Holy Spirit.

All three persons of the Trinity were present in this beautiful picture of unity. The Son is the image of God, the exact representation of His being, the Father and the Spirit lovingly approve of the Son.

That's amazing, because Jesus was being baptised. And John's baptism was a symbol of repentance. All the dirty sinners were flocking to the river to be washed clean. They were repenting, turning away from living self-centred lives and turning to live a God-centred life. Jesus stepped in, fully identifying with the broken and sinful people he came to save.

Jesus could have stood on the bank of the river pointing his finger and saying, "that's right, you're all sinful and you need to get clean." He was the only one who was sinless and didn't need to be cleaned. But instead, he jumped in, fully entering into our situation. John the Baptist was perturbed. He felt that Jesus should be baptising him, not the other way around, but Jesus reassured him that it is right for Jesus to fully identify with us. This was right at the beginning. All four gospels put Jesus' baptism before he had done any miracles, had taught, or healed, walked on water, multiplied bread and fish, or argued with the religious leaders.

So, Jesus emerged from the water. Having done nothing from a worldly perspective that could "earn" His Father's approval, and the Father says, "This is my son whom I love. With Him I am well pleased."

This wonderful image of God the Trinity is where we go in eternity. Through Jesus we are included in this life of loving unity.

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Our reading from John 16 comes on the night before Jesus died. So, on this important night, when Jesus only has moments left to teach his disciples before his death, what did he teach them? Trinity. It actually starts in chapter 13 when Jesus washes his disciples feet. Then 14-16 he teaches them and in chapter 17 he prays.

He promises them His Spirit. He tells them he is going away but he will not leave them as orphans.

The Trinity is right there. Jesus, the Son, says that he doesn't leave the disciples as orphans, without a Father. He is leaving, but they are still children of the same heavenly Father. They are not orphans, and in the context of telling them again and again that they will be given another, the

Holy Spirit, he also says, "I will come to you." Jesus uses many different statements and images across these chapters to show the unity of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. He tells them that Jesus and the Father are One. Jesus and the Spirit are One.

He explained that the Spirit's role is like a spotlight. The Spirit points people to Jesus. He reminds Christians of what Jesus taught and He dwells in us, He is the presence of Jesus within us.

Then he comes to our reading. He says, "I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear." There's too much for our limited brains to take in. "But when He, The Spirit of Truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come."

The Spirit guides us deeper into following Jesus. He speaks what he hears from Jesus and the Father. The Spirit is like the breath of God carrying the word of God to us. He applies the Word of God to our lives. And He is the one who guided the writing of the New Testament for us.

So, Jesus is our way in to the joyful, loving union of the Three. In the first verse I shared, he prayed, John 17:24 - "I want others to be with me where I am." Jesus wants us to join Him in his eternal life of love.

I'd like to share an illustration with you. This will help you see this truth in a different way. Illustrate on whiteboard.

Imagine if God was all alone, a simple, monolithic being, or power. Let's call this God, "god" with a small G because it's not the true God. How would such a power, being, or "god" relate to anything else?

That god creates everything - who knows why? and that "god's" relationship with everything flows out of who that god is.

That "god" may choose to love, or may choose not to love. That god may choose to express wrath and judgement or he may not. That god's relationship with us and the world is an unpredictable question mark.

But because the true God is Trinity: Father, Son and Spirit eternally in a loving relationship, we can rely on God always loving. Everything the true God does, flows from who He is. God doesn't so much choose to love, as the fact that God is love, so everything that God does is loving because it flows from the fact that God is love. That Triune relationship of love is the core of who God is. It is completely true that God loves us, and we can rely on that love because it is not an optional extra to his being, it is right at the core of who He is, who He always has been and who He always will be.

In the very nature of God is the assurance that when God creates, it is the overflow of his love. When God speaks, it is words of love. When God provides, it is the generous provision of His love. When God judges, it is done in love. Everything God does is motivated by, and is characterised by love.

When Jesus became one of us, He entered into His creation to draw us back into the life of God. So now, we are Jesus' brothers and sisters, included in the very life of God. Ephesians 2:4-7 says, "Because of His great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions – it is by grace you have been saved. And God raised us up with

Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus.” Those who trust in Jesus are today raised with him and seated with Him in His victory, in His Family. His Father is our Father, His Spirit is our Spirit and we are His brothers and sisters.

There is a belief out there that the Christian God condemns people to hell. Out there in the world there is a sense that Christians believe good people go to heaven and bad people go to hell. Or, boring people go to the clouds and pluck away at boring harps while fun people, partying people go to hell, party with their friends and have heavy metal, popular music. People out there often believe that Christians condemn everyone else to hell. But, thinking from the basis that God is love, that God is Trinity, what is heaven and what is hell?

We often think of heaven and hell as primarily places to be sent. Some people imagine that we go to one or the other based on what we do. Good people to heaven, bad people to hell. Others think that we go to heaven or hell based on belief in certain statements of faith, or creeds.

The Bible’s depiction of heaven is not primarily a place but a relationship with the God of love. Heaven is being with God, in the presence of God, because everything good can be found in God, everything good, loving and perfect flows from God. So heaven is the prodigal son being welcomed in to the arms of his loving Father. Heaven is finding the treasure that is more valuable than anything this earth can offer and giving everything else up to take hold of it. Heaven is entering into the divine dance of love where Jesus gave his all for us and we are welcomed into His loving family, filled with His loving Spirit and embraced by His loving Father.

Hell on the other hand is the opposite. If everything good is found in God, everything good, pleasing and perfect flows from God but you reject God, he will allow you to forgo everything good. If heaven is relationship with the God of love but you reject Him then you reject love, relationship and eternal joy. If Jesus is the bread of life, then the loss of Jesus means starving. If Jesus is the Light of the World then the loss of Jesus means darkness. If Jesus is the Good Shepherd, the the loss of Jesus means wandering alone and lost. If Jesus is the resurrection and the life, then the loss of Jesus is eternal death. And if Jesus is the Lamb of God, sacrificed for our sins, the loss of Jesus means paying that price for ourselves.

Do you know the story of Eugene Oregon (Onyagin)? It is a classic Russian novel in which a jaded aristocrat, Onegin, meets an innocent young girl in the countryside. The girl, Tatyana, writes him a letter, offering him her love. Onegin does not reply. When they meet again, he turns her down: “the letter was touching,” he tells her, “but he would soon grow bored of marriage to her.” Years later, Onegin enters a party and sees a stunningly beautiful woman. It is Tatyana. But she is now married. Onegin falls in love with her. He tries desperately to win her back. But Tatyana refuses him. Once, the door was open: she offered him her love. Now it is shut.

For many people, it is easy to reject Jesus now. Like Tatyana’s letter to Onegin, his offer is touching. But, we believe we will be happier without such a commitment. We worry he will cramp our style, so we move on with life and leave him in the spiritual countryside. One day, the Bible warns, we will see Jesus in all his glory, our eyes painfully open to his majesty. We will know in that moment that all our greatest treasures were nothing compared with him, and we will bitterly regret that decision. But it will be no more unfair than Tatyana’s rejection of Onegin. If we reject Jesus, he will one day reject us, and we will be eternally devastated. But, if we accept Jesus now, we will live with him forever in a fullness of life we cannot begin to imagine. The choice is ours.

If we trust Jesus today, then we are included in the life of the Triune God of love. Jesus' Father becomes our Father, His Spirit becomes our Spirit and his brothers and sisters become our brothers and sisters. We are welcomed into the church where we enjoy God's love, share God's love and wait for Jesus' return to set the whole creation right.

That's an offer better than the best job you can think of. With God we get the riches of heaven, better than the best paid job. God is never short of a buck. He's the owner of the whole of creation and he provides for us today. When we are part of the life of God, we have brothers and sisters all across the globe, fellow children of our heavenly Father who we can share the riches and challenges of life with.

When we are drawn into the life of God we have His Spirit within us. His Spirit who knows more about balance in life than we ever will. The Spirit of Jesus who insists we take a sabbath rest, we find rest and peace in him that goes beyond anything the world has to offer.

When we are drawn into the life of God we have incredible freedom to be who he has made us to be, power to overcome the sin in our lives and freedom to enjoy the world he has made.

That's how we truly enter life in all its fullness. Don't you want to get in on that? Of course you want to be included in that! Let's pray.