

Needing the Trinity

When preaching on Trinity Sunday, the preacher is faced with the choice of whether to focus on trying to explain the Holy Trinity in terms that will make sense to people or to concentrate on the Scripture readings and not try to explain this most difficult church doctrine. However, when trying to decide which approach to take, Martin Luther's words on this come to mind, **"To try to deny the Trinity endangers your salvation, to try to understand the Trinity endangers your sanity."** Many attempts to explain the Trinitarian God have been made over the centuries, but all fall short of adequately explaining it at some point. Most Christians know what the Holy Trinity is but to clearly explain it to someone is nearly impossible. Still, it is this concept of the Holy Trinity that gives Christians our unique identity among the world's religions. While historically, Jews, Muslims and Christians all worship and follow the God of Abraham, we have a unique understanding of God and God's manifestation and relationship to creation. This understanding leads us to a unique worldview.

The unique understanding that we have of God is that God is a relational Being and invites us into community with each other. This community is unlike the community aspects of the Jewish and Islam religions. While there is a community aspect to these religions, it can be seen as more a closed community. That is, the community is restricted to those who belong, to those who are like them. Christians take the bold stand that our community is not only that of believers, but also includes non-believers as well. Being a community-based religion, we get a strength from the community. A strength that no other group can give us, or that we can achieve on our own. Our community transcends time and place, giving us a connection to others and a hope about the future that sustains us.

While we can for a while be a Christian without this community of church, we really cannot last for long. It is like the old preacher who went to visit a parishioner who had not been in church for quite some time. The pastor knocked on the door, and the man invited him in. Without saying anything, the pastor sat beside the fireplace to warm himself. Quietly, he went over to the fire and picked up a burning ember with the tongs and placed it just outside the fireplace. Both men sat in silence and watched as the ember slowly turned a dark color as it cooled down. The pastor then went over to the ember, picked it up and placed it on the fire where they could see it reignite. The pastor thanked the man for his time and left. The man started coming to church again. This illustration shows the energy that we get by being in church. It is in church where we are in relationship with God and others that renews our strength so that we can let our light shine in the world.

The truly unique thing about being Christian means that our relationships do not end with those who share like beliefs. We are called by Jesus to interact and respond to those who are not believers in such a way so that they can see what life is like within the relationship of the Trinity. The relational Trinity means that we are connected to everyone. Because of this connection, it has been said that when one person suffers, we all suffer. It is this connection to others that led people like Dietrich Bonhoffer, Oskar Schindler and others to speak out and help those being hunted and killed by the Nazis. It is this connection that led Mother Teresa to live and work among India's poorest people and leads us to do what we can to combat hunger, abuse and other injustices through our donations and efforts.

This connection is best illustrated in this story:

A mouse looked through the crack in the wall to see the farmer and his wife open a package. "What food might this contain?" the mouse wondered - - - he was devastated to discover it was a mousetrap.

Retreating to the farmyard, the mouse proclaimed the warning 'There is a mousetrap in the house! There is a mousetrap in the house!'

The chicken clucked and scratched, raised her head and said, "Mr. Mouse, I can tell this is a grave concern to you, but it is of no consequence to me. I cannot be bothered by it." The mouse turned to the pig and told him, "There is a mousetrap in the house! There is a mousetrap in the house!" The pig sympathized, but said, "I am so very sorry, Mr. Mouse, but there is nothing I can do about it but pray. Be assured you are in my prayers."

The mouse turned to the cow and said "There is a mousetrap in the house! There is a mousetrap in the house!" The cow said, "Wow, Mr. Mouse. I'm sorry for you, but it's no skin off my nose." So, the mouse returned to the house, head down and dejected, to face the farmer's mousetrap ... alone.

That very night a sound was heard throughout the house -- like the sound of a mousetrap catching its prey. The farmer's wife rushed to see what was caught. In the darkness, she did not see it was a venomous snake whose tail the trap had caught. The snake bit the farmer's wife. The farmer rushed her to the hospital and she returned home with fever.

Everyone knows you treat a fever with fresh chicken soup, so the farmer took his hatchet to the farmyard for the soup's main ingredient.

But his wife's sickness continued, so friends and neighbors came to sit with her around the clock. To feed them, the farmer butchered the pig. The farmer's wife did not get well: she died.

So many people came for her funeral; the farmer had the cow slaughtered to provide enough meat for all of them. The mouse looked upon it all from his crack in the wall with great sadness.

So, the next time you hear someone is facing a problem and think it doesn't concern you, remember ---- when one of us is threatened, we are all at risk. We are all involved in this journey called life. We must keep an eye out for one another and make an extra effort to encourage one another.

As this story shows, we are all connected and in relationship not only with each other but with God as well. We are in relationship with others whom we may think are too distant from us and have no connection to us.

So, while we may never be able to adequately explain the infinite God with the finite words and understandings of created beings, we have the assurance that we are not alone in our journey here on earth. Not only do we have each other, united by a belief in this threefold nature of this infinite Godhead, but we also have the presence of that Godhead leading us, guiding us, bringing us to where the Godhead wants us to be - in complete communion with each other and with God.

YouTube links:

Gospel and Sermon: <https://youtu.be/gLGDhxjiEFk>

Service: <https://youtu.be/yLjMM-gnSr8>