

Today is Trinity Sunday. It's an unusual day in the church calendar. Every one of our other feast days celebrates an incident in Jesus' life, either be it his birth at Christmas, his resurrection at Easter, the coming of the spirit at Pentecost. But on Trinity Sunday we don't celebrate a story so much as an idea, and to make it even more complicated is not an easy idea. This notion of Trinity, that God is three, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and God is one. It's a very difficult day on which to preach, which is why I normally ask my colleague Rebecca to take up the duties today. But I didn't think I could do that this week it really was my turn this year.

So, I tried another tactic, I thought I'd initiate a new feast day in the church calendar to coincide with Trinity Sunday to give me something else to talk about. So, we're celebrating Pipe Sunday today, I hope it catches on. We are celebrating Pipe Sunday here because on Monday two enormous truckloads of pipes arrived from upper state, New York. And we were very excited as we unloaded them and I hear it's not even all the pipes, there's still another truck to come in September, but the church is completely full now of material that will be put together to make our new organ. So it's very exciting. So, in honor of that today, we are calling Pipe Sunday.

But as I sat down this week it occurred to me that Trinity Sunday actually goes quite well with the idea of Pipe Sunday. One doesn't have to supplant the other because as I've been watching the organ being installed, I've noticed... Well, perhaps I've realized a bit slowly that it takes three elements for the organ to actually work. It needs someone with a mind at the keyboard to play the notes. It needs the physical pipes for the sound to be made. And then the unseen wind that comes out of the blowers goes through the pipes and makes the music that we're so looking forward to hearing. And I see something of the work of the Trinity in this. God, the Father, is the mind behind the creation. The Son, Jesus, is the physical form in which we recognize and see God. And the Spirit, so often refer to in the Bible as wind as the breath of God. So just as there could be no music from our new organ, without these three elements, what we see in scripture is the one God always working through three persons.

I want to look at that passage. We've heard from Romans chapter five to see how all three persons of the Trinity work together to bring us peace with God. First let's consider the interesting notion that's there that through Jesus, we have obtained access to God's grace, and Paul's using a technical word here that appears a few times in the New Testament, prosagoge, a Greek word, which is translated as gaining access or obtaining access. But it has a particular use, it's when someone's ushered into the presence of royalty. That's when that word, prosagoge, is used to have access to royalty.

I don't want to disappoint anyone who might be visiting London soon, perhaps who's been inspired by watching those wonderful Jubilee celebrations last week, but you can't simply go up to the gates of Buckingham Palace, knock on the gates and ask the soldier there you'd like to see the Queen. Well, you could do that, but you're not going to get very far. But if you happen to know one of the Queen's courtiers or better still one of her children, then they might be able to lead you through the front gate, through all the miles and miles of corridors in the palace, right through into the presence of the Queen. She might even give you tea like she did with Paddington Bear. Prosagoge is that sense of being led into the presence of royalty, which is a powerful image of the work of God in Christ Jesus.

Left to our own desires, we are left standing outside the gates as it were. We could never make our way to God. But if we are justified, if we accept God's free gift of grace, then Jesus leads us into the very presence of God, the Father. Paul uses the images I've said elsewhere in his writings, and he uses it in Ephesians in a way that brings out the role of the Trinity even more distinctly. He says there, through Jesus we have access in one Spirit, to the Father. And I want to pause and reflect for a moment on what this image says to us about the nature of God. The idea of Jesus by the Spirit, introducing us to the Father, speaks of God as a kind of community, even a family.

Too many of us when we think of God, we think of some distant, lonely, isolated, tyrannical figure, perhaps floating above the skies somewhere. But that's not the image of God that we see revealed in scripture as three in one and one in three. The notion

of the Trinity invites us to imagine God as a network of relationships. That's what the Bible means when it famously refers to God as love. God is the love that makes up the relationships between the Father, the Son, and the Spirit. And God's love, Paul goes on to say, has been poured into our hearts. God invites us to join in that divine community of love, which is a magnificent truth, difficult to grasp, but wonderfully depicted in Andrei Rublev's famous ancient icon of the Trinity.

In that icon, the Father, the Son and the Spirit are depicted as the three angels who visit Abraham. They sit round the table, eat food and drink. Their faces are nearly identical, but they're dressed in different colors. The Father wears gold, the Son blue and the Spirit green. And the Father gazes at the Son and the Son gazes back at the Father and gestures towards the Spirit, the Spirit gazes at the Father but points toward the Son with one hand and opens up the circle with the other making room for others to join in this sacred meal. And as a whole, the icon exudes intimacy and adoration, clearly the three persons around the table, respect each other, enjoy each other's company, but it also exudes openness. This is no middle school clique gathering together around the table. There is space at the table around for the viewer, those of us who look at the icon, are drawn in. We're invited to sit around that table with the three who are there. There's always room in the three in one to add one more, to extend the invitation, to make the table more expansive, more welcoming.

God is love, and the Trinity is at its heart an expression of deep unfaltering and life-giving love between the Father, the Son, and the Spirit. The relationships between the persons of the Godhead are not relationships of domination or even hierarchy, it's a relationship of unselfish, sacrificial love. And that love has been poured into our hearts. Trinity Sunday is a great reminder that God's invitation to us is not so much just to understand God with our mind, rather it's to experience God with our heart. My goal as a preacher is not to entertain you with holy thoughts, it's certainly not to explain God to you so some sort of penny drops as you finally understand all there is to know about God. No, I simply aim to point towards our trying, mysterious

God who invites us to share in his love and invites us to have fellowship with him. A God who is always beyond our understanding yet close to us whose presence is with us, dwelling with us by the gift of the Spirit.

I discovered on Monday as we carried the organ pipes into church, that the biggest of the pipes is 32 feet long and weighs nearly 400 pounds. My understanding is that it's not really in the organ to make a sound, it's not there for its musicality or its note. It's there as a big base pipe to resonate it's there so that when the organist opens it up, we don't so much hear that pipe, but we feel it. We feel it resonating deep within us. God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit so that we can feel the reality of God. The reality of God's divine love, even if we can't understand God's nature. The call is to feel rather than to understand.

Which leads directly to the final point I'd like to make. How are we to respond to this complex notion of God as Trinity? Well, the answer to that question is actually simple. We're to respond to the triune God in worship. As our collect for today says we're to worship the unity. The Trinity is not a problem to be solved, it's something to be worshiped and glorified. Which is why Trinity Sunday is a great day to celebrate the arrival of a new organ in church. The organ has a specific purpose it's to lead God's people in worship. As the organ with its player at the keyboard, its pipes and its wind, as together they make music, we're invited as the congregation to join in just as we are invited to join in with a divine communion of love.

My prayer on this Trinity Sunday is that our new organ will lead the people of St. James in worship for decades to come. And that the people will join in with the worship led by the organ, knowing and feeling that in such a way, they are participating in the great communion of divine love, which we call God. Amen.