

JOHN 16:1-15 "Blessed Trinity"

LISTEN TO THE OPENING VERSE OF A HYMN WRITTEN IN 1754. I SHARE IT BECAUSE IT HIGHLIGHTS THE TRINITY, AND IT ALSO CONNECTS US TO THE GOSPEL PASSAGE.

"HOLY TRINITY, THANKS AND PRAISE TO THEE.
THAT OUR LIFE AND WHOLE SALVATION-
FLOW FROM CHRIST'S BLEST INCARNATION,
AND HIS DEATH FOR US ON THE SHAMEFUL CROSS."

TODAY IS WHAT THE CHURCH CALLS "**TRINITY SUNDAY**", MEANING THE SUGGESTED PASSAGES FOCUS ON THE DOCTRINE OF ONE GOD REVEALED IN THREE PERSONS. THE WORD "TRINITY" MEANING TRI-UNITY, HAS BEEN DESCRIBED AS A WORD OF WONDER, A WAY OF TRYING TO EXPRESS THE INEXPRESSIBLE. ONE GOD FOUND IN THREE PERSONS IS LARGELY A MYSTERY THAT CANNOT BE FULLY EXPLAINED OR GRASPED BY THE HUMAN MIND.

THERE IS ALSO THE FACT THAT THE WORDS TRINITY OR TRIUNE AS PERTAINING TO GOD ARE NOT FOUND IN THE BIBLE. IT IS IMPORTANT TO NOTE HOWEVER- THE IDEA GOD IS ONE GOD, FOUND IN THREE PERSONS IS IMPLIED IN SEVERAL PLACES IN THE NEW TESTAMENT.

THUS THE DOCTRINE OF THE TRINITY IS- A CONFESSION OF FAITH ABOUT THE UNIQUE REVELATION OF GOD'S SELF. THIS THEOLOGICAL TEACHING CAME ABOUT A FEW HUNDRED YEARS AFTER CHRIST'S DEATH, RESURRECTION, AND ASCENSION IN RESPONSE TO MOVEMENTS, WHICH DISTORTED THE GOSPEL.

ONE OF THESE MOVEMENTS TAUGHT- THE GOD OF THE NEW TESTAMENT WHOM JESUS PROCLAIMED WAS NOT THE SAME GOD FOUND IN THE OLD TESTAMENT. ANOTHER SAID JESUS WAS NOT DIVINE, BUT RATHER ONLY A DEMIGOD, MEANING- A MAN WITH SOME DIVINE CHARACTERISTICS. A THIRD SUGGESTED THAT THE HOLY SPIRIT, WHO CAME UPON JESUS' FOLLOWERS ON PENTECOST- REPLACED GOD THE FATHER, AND GOD THE SON.

CONSEQUENTLY CHRISTIAN THEOLOGIANS MET TO CONFRONT THE PROBLEM OF THESE TEACHINGS, AND THEN THEY COMPOSED THE TRINITARIAN DECLARATIONS WE HAVE TODAY.

JOHN CALVIN, OVER 1000 YEARS LATER, DESCRIBED THE FAITH OF TRUE BELIEVERS AS "A FIRM AND CERTAIN KNOWLEDGE OF GOD'S BENEVOLENCE TOWARDS US, FOUNDED UPON THE TRUTH OF THE FREELY GIVEN PROMISE OF CHRIST, BOTH REVEALED TO OUR MINDS AND SEALED UPON OUR HEARTS THROUGH THE HOLY SPIRIT."

IN OTHER WORDS, IN PLAIN ENGLISH CALVIN SAID: FAITH IS GIVEN TO US BY THE HOLY SPIRIT WHO POINTS US TO JESUS, WHO RECONCILES US TO GOD THE FATHER.

YET THE CONCEPT OF ONE GOD WHO IS KNOWN TO US IN THREE PERSONS, PREDOMINANTLY CALLED: FATHER, SON, AND HOLY SPIRIT IS NOT EASY, INDEED NOT POSSIBLE, TO TRULY EXPLAIN. NONE OF THE EXPLANATIONS THAT PEOPLE HAVE COME UP WITH REALLY CAPTURES WHO OUR TRIUNE GOD IS.

BUT WHAT WE DO HAVE ARE THOSE SCRIPTURAL PASSAGES, SOME OF WHICH ARE: THE GREAT COMMISSION IN MATTHEW 28, WHERE JESUS COMMANDS HIS FOLLOWERS TO BAPTIZE IN THE NAME OF THE- FATHER AND SON AND HOLY SPIRIT.

THERE IS ALSO JESUS' BAPTISM DESCRIBED IN MARK 1:10-11, WHICH TELLS HOW THE DOVE DESCENDED UPON JESUS AS THE VOICE OF HIS FATHER SPOKE: "THIS IS MY SON...."

WE ALSO HAVE PAUL'S BENEDICTION IN 2 CORINTHIANS 13:1: "THE GRACE OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST, THE LOVE OF GOD, AND THE COMMUNION OF THE HOLY SPIRIT BE WITH YOU ALL."

AND IN EPHESIANS 2:18, THE APOSTLE EXPLAINS HOW JESUS UNITES BOTH JEWISH AND GENTILE CHRISTIANS TOGETHER, WRITING: "FOR THROUGH HIM WE BOTH HAVE ACCESS TO THE FATHER BY THE ONE SPIRIT."

WE ALSO HAVE TODAY'S GOSPEL READING FROM JOHN, WHICH CONTAINS SOME OF JESUS' FINAL INSTRUCTIONS AND WORDS OF COMFORT TO THE TWELVE, BEFORE HE GOES TO THE CROSS.

CONTAINED WITHIN THIS DISCOURSE ARE CHRIST'S OWN WORDS THAT POINT TO GOD AS TRINITY. JESUS DESCRIBES THE HOLY SPIRIT AS THE GREAT COUNSELOR, A TEACHER AND GUIDE—WHO WILL REVEAL TO THE DISCIPLES ALL THOSE THINGS THEY CANNOT NOW UNDERSTAND, OR EVEN BEAR TO HEAR.

THE SPIRIT WILL ALSO REVEAL THE SIN OF THE WORLD, AND WILL CHALLENGE ALL OF THOSE WHO DO NOT REALLY KNOW THE GOD OF ISRAEL—BECAUSE THEY DO NOT BELIEVE JESUS IS ONE WITH THE FATHER AND THE SPIRIT. JESUS' DECLARATION- THAT THE SPIRIT WILL TEACH THEM THE TRUTH OF HIS WORDS, WHICH ARE FROM HIS FATHER, EMPHASIZES THE UNITY OF GOD WHO IS ONE.

HERE IS STORY I CAME ACROSS THAT MAY BE HELPFUL TO US IN OUR SEARCH FOR BETTER A UNDERSTANDING OF THIS.

A YOUNG BOY WAS REALLY ENJOYING HIS FAMILY VACATION IN DISNEYLAND. UNFORTUNATELY IN THE BUSTLE OF THE CROWDS AND THE EXCITEMENT OF THE DAY'S ADVENTURE THIS BOY BECAME SEPARATED FROM HIS PARENTS. SUDDENLY DISNEYLAND BECAME A PLACE OF STRANGENESS AND FEAR. A PARK ATTENDANT FOUND THE VERY DISTRESSED CHILD AND TOOK HIM TO THE AREA SET ASIDE TO REUNITE LOST CHILDREN AND PARENTS; AND THERE THEY CAME TO HIM.

LIFE, AT TIMES, CAN BE SOMEWHAT LIKE THE BOY'S JOYFUL AND FEARFUL EXPERIENCES IN DISNEYLAND. PEOPLE CAN BECOME SO BUSY SEEKING, FINDING, AND REVEALING IN THE THRILLS AND PLEASURES OF LIFE, THEY GET SEPARATED FROM GOD. AND LIKE THE BOY IN THE THEME PARK, WE TOO NEED SOMEONE TO FIND AND LEAD US TO THE PLACE WHERE WE CAN BE REUNITED WITH GOD.

IT IS THE HOLY SPIRIT WHO HELPS US DISCOVER WE ARE LOST AND THEN POINTS US TO JESUS, WHO BRINGS US INTO A RIGHT RELATIONSHIP WITH HIS FATHER. JESUS, IN THE GOSPEL PASSAGE, TELLS HIS FOLLOWERS IT IS A GOOD THING HE WILL GO AWAY, SUGGESTING ONLY AFTER HE DEPARTS WILL THEY RECEIVE GREATER KNOWLEDGE ABOUT GOD.

AND BY LEAVING THEM, HE MEANS NOT ONLY IN HIS DEATH, FOR HE ROSE AGAIN, BUT ALSO LEAVING THEM A SECOND TIME TO ASCEND TO HIS FATHER IN HEAVEN. THIS COUNSELOR, THE HOLY SPIRIT CAME, AS PROMISED, ON PENTECOST. AND IT WAS AND IS THE SPIRIT OF GOD WHO TEACHES US THE TRUTH OF GOD, AND BRINGS US TO FAITH IN JESUS AS SAVIOR, THUS ENABLING US TO RECEIVE THE GIFT OF SALVATION.

IT HAS BEEN SAID THAT THE ROLE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IS TO TAKE THE THINGS OF CHRIST AND INTERPRET THEM TO HIS CHURCH-SO CHRISTIANS MAY GROW IN GRACE AND SERVE GOD. MAX LUCADO IN HIS WORK: "A GENTLE THUNDER". HE OFFERS THIS ILLUSTRATION CONCERNING CHRISTIANS WHO TRY TO WALK WITH THE LORD **WITHOUT** THE HELP OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

LUCADO SUGGESTS THAT THE HOLY SPIRIT IS THE MUSIC OF OUR FAITH AND RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD. HE SAYS THE CHRISTIAN LIFE THAT DOES NOT TAKE ADVANTAGE OF WHAT THE SPIRIT OFFERS IS MUCH LIKE A MAN WHO WANTS TO LEARN HOW TO DANCE.

BEING A RATIONAL, INTELLECTUAL PERSON, THIS MAN GOES TO THE STORE AND BUYS A "HOW-TO-DANCE" INSTRUCTION BOOK. HE READS THE BOOK AND SPENDS HOURS AND HOURS DILIGENTLY PRACTICING THE DANCE STEPS-FOLLOWING EXACTLY HOW THEY ARE ILLUSTRATED IN THE BOOK. AFTER MANY WEEKS THE MAN IS CONFIDENT HE HAS LEARNED THE DANCE AND SO HE GOES TO HIS WIFE TO SHOW HER HIS NEW SKILL.

HOLDING THE BOOK IN ONE HAND- SO HE CAN READ THE INSTRUCTIONS ALOUD TO HIS WIFE-HE CORRECTLY PERFORMS ALL THAT IS REQUIRED. HIS WIFE PRAISES HIS EXECUTION OF THE STEPS, BUT THEN SUGGESTS HE FAILED TO **REALLY** DANCE. WHEN THE MAN PROTESTS THAT HE DID EVERYTHING THE BOOK INSTRUCTED, SHE AGREED, BUT ADDED- "YOU FORGOT THE MOST IMPORTANT PART-THE MUSIC." SHE THEN POPPED A CD INTO THE PLAYER, TOOK HER HUSBAND HANDS, AND DANCED TO THE MUSIC WITH HIM.

MR. LUCADO EXPLAINS THE POINT OF THE STORY, AND THE TRUTH ABOUT THE SPIRIT'S ROLE IN THIS WAY: "WE CHRISTIANS ARE PRONE TO FOLLOW THE BOOK WHILE IGNORING THE MUSIC. WE MASTER THE DOCTRINE, OUTLINE THE CHAPTERS, MEMORIZE THE DISPENSATIONS, DEBATE THE RULES, AND STIFFLY STEP ON THE DANCE FLOOR OF LIFE WITH NO MUSIC IN OUR HEARTS. JESUS KNEW THAT, FOR THAT REASON, ON THE NIGHT BEFORE HIS DEATH HE INTRODUCED THE DISCIPLES TO THE SONG-MAKER OF THE TRINITY: THE HOLY SPIRIT."

TO UNDERSTAND THIS BETTER IT HELPS TO REMEMBER JESUS TOLD HIS FOLLOWERS THE HOLY SPIRIT IS AN ADVOCATE- MEANING A HELPER. THE SPIRIT HELPS US BY EXPOSING SIN IN THE WORLD, AND ALSO WITHIN OURSELVES TO BRING THE WORLD AND US INTO REPENTANCE.

THUS GOD THE SPIRIT BOTH EXPOSES AND CONDEMNS THE WORK OF SATAN, WHOSE POWER, WHILE GREAT, IS-NO MATCH FOR THE POWER OF GOD THE SON WHO DIED ON THE CROSS FOR OUR SALVATION, BECAUSE GOD THE FATHER RAISED JESUS TO LIFE AGAIN.

IT IS THE SPIRIT WHO SHOWS US CHRIST'S GLORY AND HOW HE MADE PEACE BETWEEN US AND GOD THE FATHER. THIS IS WHY WE ALSO NEED THE MUSIC THE SPIRIT COMPOSES FOR OUR LIVES AS CHRIST'S DISCIPLES. THE MUSIC THE SPIRIT SENDS INTO OUR SOULS IS THE ONLY WAY WE CAN LEARN TO LOVE GOD, AND FOLLOW JESUS IN OUR DANCE OF LIFE.

IT IS MY HOPE YOU WILL REMEMBER WHILE UNDERSTANDING DOCTRINE OF THE TRINITY IS VALUABLE EVEN MORE IMPORTANT IS A PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP WITH CHRIST. JESUS IS INDEED, LIKE THE BIBLE SAYS- THE PIONEER AND PERFECTOR OF OUR FAITH. HE IS THE SON -GOD SENT INTO THE WORLD TO SAVE SINNERS, AND THE ONE WHO SENDS HIS SPIRIT TO ABIDE WITHIN THOSE HE SAVES.

I WILL CLOSE NOW LIKE I BEGAN, WITH ANOTHER OLD HYMN, THIS ONE FROM THE 1800'S. IT OFFERS A TESTIMONY OF FAITH CONCERNING THE TRINITY, AND IS ALSO A PRAYER.

“FATHER OF HEAVEN, WHOSE LOVE PROFOUND, A RANSOM FOR OUR SOULS HATH FOUND.
BEFORE THY THRONE WE SINNERS BEND; TO US THY PARDONING LOVE EXTEND.
ALMIGHTY SON, INCARNATE WORD, OUR PROPHET, PRIEST, REDEEMER, LORD-
BEFORE THY THRONE WE SINNERS BEND, TO US THY SAVING GRACE EXTEND.
ETERNAL SPIRIT, BY WHOSE BREATH THE SOUL IS RAISED FROM SIN AND DEATH,
BEFORE THY THRONE WE SINNERS BEND, TO US THY QUICKENING POWER EXTEND.
JEHOVAH-FATHER, SPIRIT, SON – MYSTERIOUS GODHEAD, THREE IN ONE.
BEFORE THY THRONE WE SINNERS BEND; GRACE, PARDON, LIFE TO US EXTEND.”

AND SO, EVEN WHEN WE DO NOT FULLY UNDERSTAND THE DOCTRINE- MAY WE BE BLESSED WITH GIFT OF BELIEF IN THE TRINITY, ONE GOD FOREVER. AMEN