

Sermon for Trinity Sunday - Revd Martyn Crompton

11th June 2017

Many Christians find it difficult to understand the Trinity and so accord the doctrine little importance. For example here is an icon of Rublev's Trinity, which I found discarded at Emmaus in their cheapest section.

Yet our epistle today from 2 Cor 13 contains a Trinitarian blessing which has become an important part of our worshipping life together. 'The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.' But it is easy to reduce this to a familiar and potentially meaningless formula by repeating it without considering the context in which it was written and the challenge it contains.



Paul was responding to unpleasant personal criticism from certain members in the church at Corinth. It took the form of criticism of his status as an apostle, of his personal appearance, his spiritual understanding and teaching ability. It would have been easy for him to distance himself from those who treated him so unkindly, but he defends himself and still, by the grace of God, responds in love. Here is the challenge - he suggests that as Christians we should love each other with the same love that binds the three persons of the Trinity into one. God knows we need His help to be able to do this.

We need to know who we are as Christians and where we are going. The three persons of the Trinity give us secure points of reference to guide us on our spiritual journey.

In the prologue to John's gospel we learn that we are children of God, therefore brothers and sisters of Jesus and of each other, Jesus brings to God's love to us and the Holy Spirit enables us to receive and share it with other. Such is the love and grace of God.

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ is the only place where we can stand before God. We can do nothing to save ourselves. We can only receive God's free gift of salvation and life

in all its fullness through the death of Jesus. He has done all that is needed to save not only ourselves, but everyone who put their faith in Him.

The love of God is at the heart of our faith. It is God's love for the world which led Jesus to come into it, weak and humble as a new born baby, so that salvation could be offered to all. So as we say these words we are challenged by our need for forgiveness which caused Jesus to die, yet at the same time reassured of God's love for us and His promise that our sins, and they are many, are both forgiven and forgotten. We are also challenged by the fact that God makes this loving offer not just to us, but to everyone, even those with whom we disagree or of whom we disapprove.

The fellowship of the Holy Spirit reminds us that the Spirit of Jesus lives within each one of us that, as members of His church, we share His love with each other and, as our gospel reminds us, are commissioned to share it with the world, making and baptising disciples in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. And Jesus' promise is that He will be with to the end of the age.

So God's plan for Christian living is based on a Trinitarian foundation, involving the Father who loves us, the Son who dies for us and the Spirit who lives within us and helps us to relate to God and our fellow human being in the way God intends. When we say the words of the Grace we are praying that we may show the same love to each other as binds the Trinity together.

One of the many beautiful insights into the Trinity is revealed in Rublev's icon. The three persons live together in community, each aware, supportive and an integral part of God's loving purpose. So the three look at each other and Rublev's use of perspective draws us into relationship with them – a picture of grace.

This invites us to reflect on what it means to be church. We will differ in understanding and attitude. Everyone who has been a member of a church will recognise the problems Paul refers to though they are only a few of the many as anyone who has been involved in leadership will know.

But there should be no place for animosity, gossiping or abuse. God the Father loves us all, Jesus died for us all, the Spirit lives within us all. With their help we can and should forgive and forget. It is only when we not only look to God, but ask Him to help us to live in His presence, and allow His love to flow through us, that we become living icons revealing the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen