

CHRIST MEMORIAL EPISCOPAL CHURCH, NORTH BROOKFIELD, MA

SERMON—Rev. Dr. Paula Winsor Sage

JUNE 11, 2017

TRINITY SUNDAY

MATTHEW 28:16-20

PRAYER: May the words of my mouth and the meditations of all of our hearts be acceptable to you Lord, you who are our strength and our redeemer; and we ask you to help us to know you better. AMEN

GOOD MORNING! Welcome to TRINITY SUNDAY, in the name of THE FATHER, THE SON, and THE HOLY SPIRIT! We say these words all the time; some people cross themselves every time they hear it or say it. We know that we believe strongly in a God who exists in 3 forms (father, son, spirit) but is all the same God. I think everyone knows that we call that “The Trinity”. But, I think there are few if any, including theologians, who really understand how what we call the Trinity came to be or how it exists. It is known as the most difficult doctrine to explain. The word does not occur in scripture, but the doctrine clearly does--in all the passages where John speaks of the Word being made flesh and where Jesus speaks of Himself being in the Father and the Father in Him, and the Spirit coming

to dwell in us from both of them, and where the Father and Son and Holy Spirit are linked together.

I am not going to give you a deeply theological sermon trying to explain it today.

Why labor to explain the theology of the Trinity? Is our faith strengthened by understanding each detail? Belief is more than an intellectual exercise. What is important instead, I think, is how this three-fold nature of our God helps us. Let the Trinity remain, like the virgin birth, a divine mystery, something to believe and be grateful for--and leave as God's beautiful creation.

We have a great God--so huge that our minds cannot fully comprehend him. Out of love, He chose to reveal himself to us in three ways. Why? So that we can know Him better and draw closer to Him. Our God is almighty and all-powerful, so complete in himself, and so great that he doesn't need us. But He wants us-- He created us purely out of love, and he loves us so much that he sacrificed his only son to save us, to show us who he is more clearly, and to enable us to draw closer and to be with him forever--if we choose. And then, so that we would

never be alone, he and his Son send their Spirit to remain with us always. So, instead of getting lost in theology, let's just experience praise and wonder at what this Trinitarian God does for us.

Today's Gospel is the perfect choice for this Sunday. It contains the famous words of what we call "the great commission"--the words which the risen Jesus used to send his disciples out to convince others of the Good News that God sent Jesus as Lord in order for him to die to save them. As He prepares to ascend to heaven, he specifically tells the disciples to go out to all the world to teach others to obey Him and baptize them in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. And then Jesus reminds them of his great promise: "I am with you always, to the end of the age." One God in three persons--all present in this Gospel--the Father who created us all and sent the son to die for our sins and bind us to him, the Son who perfectly obeyed the Father and taught us how to love, and the Spirit, sent by Father and Son, the one through whom Jesus will keep his promise to be with us always. At the heart of this Trinity is a God who is

communal and all-loving. Loving, respecting, and caring for us, I believe He is calling us as His church to do exactly the same for those we encounter in the world. Love. Care. Respect. (Not hate, ignore and judge). Jesus PROMISED.

The Holy Spirit is God's Promise! It binds us together. Jesus' promise at the end of today's Gospel says, in modern English: " I am with you and will never leave. I am on your side when you follow me. You can count on me. I've got your back. So, let's see what we can do together."

Jesus promise may be restricted to those of us who are bound together by the Holy Spirit as his church--but it is not exclusive, because the opportunity for membership is forever open to all.

Promises are about RELATIONSHIPS and OPPORTUNITIES; That is what the Trinity is about as well. RELATIONSHIPS of love between God in His Three Persons and between them and all of us. OPPORTUNITIES to draw closer and get to know God better.

I like very much the way that the theologian Frederick Buechner calls the doctrine of the Trinity a Mystery. He calls Trinity Sunday “an opportunity to celebrate that the mystery beyond us, and the mystery among us, and the mystery within us are all the same mystery. Thanks be to God!” AMEN