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# Father, Son and Spirit

Sermon • Rev'd John Shoaf • 31 May 2026 • Trinity

Genesis 1:1-5 • 2 Corinthians 13:11-13 • Matthew 28:16-20

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May the words of my mouth and the thoughts of our hearts give glory to you, O Lord. Amen.

Today is Trinity Sunday, when we remember, and perhaps grapple with, one of the great mysteries of our faith. Simply put, God is one, and at the same time, is three persons: God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit. Many have tried to explain this over the years, including me; but it remains at heart a mystery, which I feel we won't understand fully until we meet God face to face. But it is not something we can just ignore. Some who believe in God and follow Christ deny the idea of the Trinity; but if you go down that road, you will eventually run into those passages of scripture which refer to it.

But perhaps, instead of wrestling with the overall meaning and mystery of the Trinity, we should bring it down to the human level. God is all about the human level. Jesus knows us inside and out, the good and the bad, the kind and the cruel, the intentional and the careless. The Holy Spirit fills us, imperfect as we are. There is nothing I can know or think or feel which God does not know

about, and understand better than we do ourselves. So what does the Trinity mean to us?

I know that for me, it means I that I feel protected, wrapped around with care at all times. God created me; Jesus died on the cross for me; the Spirit guides me every day. I probably spend the most time with Jesus. It is to Jesus that I pray and to Jesus that I apologise when I do something wrong. That constant prayer I'm always talking about, the continual dialogue I keep up from hour to hour — that is with Jesus. He sits on my shoulder — he is my conscience. It is Jesus, through the Holy Spirit, who is inspiring me as I write this sermon. I am sustained hour by hour through the day, and comforted at night. Jesus is my model, my example of how to live my life. In this, the entire Trinity participates. Those marvellous paintings and icons which show God, Jesus and the Spirit sitting around a table like human beings show us the love of their relationship. It is in this love that we are to live as well. The Trinity is our model. As God is to Jesus is to the Spirit, so are we to be to our brothers and sisters on this earth.

So the Trinity is a living idea for me. It is not necessary that I understand exactly how it can be, this three-in-one arrangement. It is enough that I know Jesus and I give thanks to God and I feel the Spirit inside me. The technical side of it, according to the doctrine which has been developed over generations but which had its formal start in the church councils of the 4<sup>th</sup> century, is that God is in three persons — Father, Son and Spirit — but all three persons consist of the same substance. That is how we can say that Jesus is God's Son, yet Jesus has existed for all time, just as God has. They are coeternal — equally having existed since the beginning. And in the first few verses of Genesis, we learn that the Spirit has been there from the beginning as well. It was the Spirit who was the “wind from God” which “swept over the face of the waters” (Gen 1:2). Jesus is not mentioned by name in Genesis, but John tells us in his Gospel that “he was in the beginning with God” (John 1:2). All three have always existed, and all are God.

John makes a great point of Jesus' eternal existence, for some in the past, and even today, have claimed either that Jesus was created by God, or fathered by God in the normal human way, or was a normal human who was made divine by God so that he could sit at God's right hand. John refers to Jesus as the Word:

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. (Genesis 1:1-2)

According to John, God created us and everyone and everything else through Jesus:

All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. (Gen 1:3)

John later confirms that “the world came into being through [Jesus]” (Gen 1:10). Speaking as he was to Jews (or rather writing), he built on their belief that God created the world, as it says in Genesis. This was still true; but the additional knowledge he was imparting to them was that the world was created through Jesus. They did not have the whole story.

We may think to ourselves: how did John and the other Biblical authors figure all this out about the Trinity? Remember that the Bible is inspired by God — that is, those men who actually wrote the Bible were writing from God’s inspiration. Some believe it was divine dictation, but I believe that the writers put things in their own words according to the ideas which God put in their heads. Those writers had all received the Holy Spirit, and so they were inspired by God through the Spirit. We must not discount the value and the prevalence of God’s inspiration through the Spirit. Prophets throughout the Old Testament were inspired by God to speak the truth to the people, and they were guided by the Spirit. The men who met in the councils of the 4<sup>th</sup> century were likewise inspired to develop the doctrine of the Trinity, as well as other things, such as the determination of which books would be included in the Bible as we know it today. We may be tempted to doubt the determinations of fallible men, but do not discount the working of the Spirit.

Recognising the Trinity does not require (thankfully) that we understand it completely. But we may recognise when God the three-in-one is working in our lives and in our world, and we may give thanks to God — Father, Son and Holy Spirit — for our creation, our lives and our salvation. Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit. Amen.