

Note: These notes were generated using YouTube automatic captions, so there may be inaccuracies in the transcription.

Trinity Sunday

By Jessica Dalton

Today is Trinity Sunday, which can feel rather daunting. When I was training as a local preacher, my supervisor thought it would be funny to assign my trial service on Trinity Sunday. She said to me cheerfully, "You know what they say, Jessica, it's not possible to preach on Trinity Sunday without preaching heresy." So we're going to talk a little more about that. Trinity Sunday is theologically rich and gives us lots to think about.

The challenge with the Trinity is that God can feel very complicated and very messy. It's hard to know anything about God when we're trying to wrap our minds around the concept of three in one, the Holy Trinity.

A Rally of Thanksgiving

My mum absolutely loves Wimbledon Tennis Championships. She would be the first person to say that tennis is most exciting when the ball is being passed back and forth and you're not sure who's going to win the point. In tennis, they call it a rally. And she says, "Tennis is very boring when it's just big serves and there's no real game to get your teeth into." Tennis is more exciting when we're passing the ball back and forth.

We used this idea for our prayers of thanksgiving this morning. Rather than passing a ball back and forth between two of us, we pass things that we are thankful for. We got into pairs or groups of three and four, and we took it in turns. One of you would think of something you are grateful for, something you're thankful for this week. And then that's you sending the ball across the net to your partner who will send it back by saying something that they are grateful for. We tried to keep a rally of things we're thankful for going. It was a wonderful way to share what we're grateful for and to create a sense of connection and community.

Understanding God: The Alphabet Soup Analogy

Now, I want to help you understand the Trinity in a way that makes sense. Imagine alphabet soup. In alphabet soup, you can pick out individual letters. You can see a 'G', a 'O', a 'D'. Each letter is distinct. You can identify them separately. But here's the thing: those letters are all

swimming in the same broth. They're inseparable from the whole. The soup holds them together.

That's a bit like the Trinity. We can know things about God the Father. We can know things about Jesus, God the Son. We can know things about the Holy Spirit. As we encounter them in our experience, they seem like separate things. We can point to them and name them. But they're all swimming in the same divine reality. They're inseparable from the whole.

Sometimes in the service, things got a bit messy when we were handling the alphabet soup. It looked chaotic. But that's okay. Sometimes God can feel chaotic and complex. Sometimes faith feels messy. And that's alright. God is bigger than our need to have everything sorted and understood.

Holding Simple and Complex Together

The reading we heard from John's Gospel is quite complicated. There's a lot in it and some of it at first reading doesn't make a huge amount of sense to us. Jesus says to Thomas, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." But then he also says, "If you know me, you will know my Father also." And Philip asks, "Show us the Father, and we will be satisfied." And Jesus responds, "Have I been with you all this time, Philip, and you still do not know me? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father."

Here's what we need to understand: some things about our faith are simple. Some things about our faith are complex. How can we try and make space for both of these things?

We can spell out what we know. We know something about Jesus. We can know who he is. We can hold on to simple truths: Jesus loves us. God forgives us. The Holy Spirit guides us. These are things we can anchor ourselves to when we are afraid and unsure.

But we can also allow ourselves to rest in the complexity. We can allow ourselves to rest in the vast and indescribable nature of God who we are invited to love and be loved by. We cannot understand God completely. We cannot adequately define God. We cannot reduce God and we cannot put God in a box. But we are invited to know God in a different way.

We are invited to rest in God's love which we cannot understand. We are invited to rest in God's care and God's presence. Even when things feel complicated and messy, we can rest in that love like a little child rests in their parent's arms.

The truth is, we need both. We need the simple things that we can hold onto. We know Jesus. We know the teachings of Jesus Christ. We know that God loves us. We know that God forgives us. These things are clear and they anchor us.

And we also need to embrace the mystery. We need to lay aside our human desire to know

and to control everything. We need to allow ourselves to wonder at the vast and infinite nature of God. We need to rest in a way of being that doesn't require us to have all the answers.

Conclusion

On Trinity Sunday, we're reminded that our faith holds both simplicity and mystery. We can know Jesus. We can know God's love and forgiveness. We can cling to the teachings of Christ. These are the things that sustain us day by day.

But we're also invited to open our hearts to the wide expanse of God's love that we cannot fully comprehend. We're invited to rest in that love. We're invited to trust in the presence of God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, even when we don't fully understand how they work together.

The Trinity is not something we need to figure out completely. It's something we're invited to experience. It's something we're invited to rest in. Like alphabet soup, the letters matter. But so does the broth that holds them together. And both are part of what makes the whole thing work.

As we leave here today, may you know those simple things of faith. May you cling to God's love for you, God's forgiveness. May you cling to the teachings of Jesus Christ. And may you also open your hearts to the mystery, to the vastness, to the incomprehensibility of God's love. May you know that God is with you in all that you do and say and are.