



Church in a Bag

Sunday 30 May

Dubbo Uniting Church



A Gathering

God of many names and places. On this day we celebrate the many ways you are revealed to us as Trinity: Creator, Redeemer, Sustainer; Father, Son, Holy Spirit; holy three in one and one in three. Yet we know that you come to us in many ways and different forms. Help us now to worship celebrating the wondrous diversity of your presence with us in all times and places.

Preparation

The Season after Pentecost begins with Trinity Sunday. This is a day where we reflect on ways in which we know God. Many people think of God as Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer; others may prefer to connect to God in



the form of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; and still others have various other ways of imagining God. The truth of the matter is that we of course do not know how to define God – God is simply too vast, and our minds too limited, to try to use language to encompass all the wonders of our loving Creator, who came and lived among us, and has promised to be with us always.

While some find it helpful to connect with God in a Trinitarian – that is, three-way form - others try to imagine God's vastness in other ways. The Bible includes a great number of images of God and names for God, ever reminding us that we can encounter the divine in a myriad of ways.

Reading: John 3:1-17

Reflection

At times we are tempted to try to explain God. But if God were so easily comprehended in our human explanation, he would not be God. At the other end of the spectrum, God is not so remote as to leave us speechless. He does come to us and will always leave his witness among us. The third chapter of John's Gospel is where we find our textual bearings for the proclamation today.

It has often been noted that Nicodemus came to Jesus by night, out of fear of being found out. No doubt he did come with concern that some of his fellow Pharisees might see him and report his visit. But the point is that he came. He came with a sense of searching and desire to know more of this unconventional rabbi from Galilee who was performing such signs as Jerusalem had not seen before. Jesus gave Nicodemus far more than the man was seeking. Before the conversation is two or three sentences along, our Lord is taking the subject to heights and depths his visitor had never dreamed of.

God the Sovereign One - Jesus speaks first of that rich Old Testament theme - the Kingdom of God. Here is the truth that God is sovereign, creator and God of all. To enter into relationship with God (to be a part of his Kingdom) is likened to birth - or rather, re-birth. Belonging to God is receiving life. That is what God's Kingdom means – God is actively ruling in the lives of those who are God's children by faith.

Next Jesus tells Nicodemus of the mystery of God's Spirit. Like the wind, which no one of us perceives as to its origin and outcome, so the Spirit of God moves and works. The Spirit makes it possible for us, born as flesh, to be born anew as spiritually alive. The Spirit of God is God's presence, creating interest and awareness of the spiritual base for life. The Spirit creates faith in us and causes that faith to motivate us to love and serve God freely.

Then the Messiah. It is Jesus who is teaching these truths. He then goes on to speak of himself as the Son of man, descended from

Heaven, and lifted up that all who believe in him might be saved. In testifying to himself, Jesus puts his own life and being into the continuity of the action of God in revealing himself. God has come to the world supremely in his messianic Son, who willingly suffered death on an uplifted Cross for the redemption of the world. Through the mystery of the Spirit, this truth comes alive in all who receive the gift of grace and respond in faith.

One God. Three ways of His coming to us. Sovereign Creator, messianic Son, life-giving Spirit. All this is in the text from John 3. The word Triune or Trinity does not occur. That word came along later in the church's vocabulary. It is not found in the Bible. Yet the truth of God to which the word points is found throughout the Bible. For that reason, we call ourselves believers in the Triune God.

But our best response to the truth of the living God comes not in talking about God, but in responding to God - with love and gratitude and humility.

Do you want to see the living God? Look for him in the lives of God's people.

See God in the beauty of creation. Catch the signs of God's Spirit in the greater beauty of faith-filled people.



We are loved and in relationship with a wonder-filled and great God who does such a daring thing as give Godself to us and our world. That is God's choice, and in this choice and action, our salvation is secured. We are in 'right relationship' with God. Blessed be the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, now and forever. Amen.

A song to sing or to read: Bring Many Names

Bring many names, beautiful and good, celebrate, in parable and story
holiness in glory, living, loving God. Hail and Hosanna! Bring many names!

Strong mother God, working night and day, planning all the wonders of creation
Setting each equation, genius at play. Hail and Hosanna! Strong mother God!

Warm father God, hugging every child, feeling the strains of human living
caring and forgiving, till we're reconciled. Hail and Hosanna, warm father God!

Old, aching God, grey with endless care, calmly piercing evil's new disguises.
Glad of good surprises, wiser than despair. Hail and Hosanna, old, aching God!

Young, growing God, eager, on the move, saying no to falsehood and unkindness.
Crying out for justice, giving all you have. Hail and Hosanna, young, growing God!

Great, living God, never fully known, joyful darkness far beyond our seeing
closer yet than breathing, everlasting home. Hail and Hosanna, great, living God!

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Closing Prayer

Lord of all creation, we confess that we have seldom heard your call in the depths
of our lives. We have not been struck speechless in your presence, nor have we
left all to follow you. Help us, nonetheless, to learn to be followers of your way. In
the challenges of daily life; in the times that threaten to undo us; when we are
overwhelmed and without hope, let us hear your word of comfort and your call to
discipleship, to mission, to living out our lives as followers of Jesus Christ. May we
not be afraid to follow where you lead us, triune God. Holy, holy, holy are you,
Source of life, Word of life, Breath of life. Send us, to warm the lives of those in
need. Send us to celebrate with those open to your abundance. Send us to bring
comfort to those among us and around us who are hurting. Send us to encourage
those for whom the light of life shines less brightly. In the name of the Father, Son
and Holy Spirit.

Amen.

With thanks to Rev Mel for preparing today's reflection



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