

The Invitation of the Trinity

A sermon based on Proverbs 8:1-4, 22-31
Deb DeMeester at Oak Grove Presbyterian
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Proverbs 8: 1-4, 22-31 *The Message*

Do you hear Lady Wisdom, Sophia, calling?

Can you hear Madame Insight raising her voice?

She's taken her stand at First and Main,
at the busiest intersection.

Right in the city square

where the traffic is thickest, she shouts,

“You—I’m talking to all of you,

everyone out here on the streets!

Listen, you idiots—learn good sense!

You blockheads—shape up!

Don’t miss a word of this—I’m telling you how to live well,

I’m telling you how to live at your best.

“GOD sovereignly made me—the first, the basic—

before God did anything else.

I was brought into being a long time ago,

well before Earth got its start.

I arrived on the scene before Ocean,

yes, even before Springs and Rivers and Lakes.

Before Mountains were sculpted and Hills took shape,

I was already there, newborn;

Long before GOD stretched out Earth’s Horizons,

and tended to the minute details of Soil and Weather,

And set Sky firmly in place,

I was there.

When God mapped and gave borders to wild Ocean,

built the vast vault of Heaven,

and installed the fountains that fed Ocean,

When God drew a boundary for Sea,

posted a sign that said NO TRESPASSING,

And then staked out Earth’s Foundations,

I was right there, making sure everything fit.

**Day after day I was there, with my joyful applause,
always enjoying God’s company,
Delighted with the world of things and creatures,
happily celebrating the human family.**

In the very beginning of Scripture, the creation story says, “Let us make these human beings in our image, in the image of male and female, God created them.” We learn from Proverbs that Sophia was with God before creation was even started – with joyful applause and enjoyment, with delight in the world of things and creatures and happily celebrating the human family. The Gospel of John tells us the Jesus was there, too... the Word by whom all things were created. It is not surprising that as years passed in the life of the early church that the concept of God as Trinity was developed. There is a them, a sense of partnership and relationship that spans the life of our very planet... It is intriguing and confusing, and, I hope, inspiring!

William Paul Young, the author of *The Shack*, a book that spawned more conversation in recent years about the Trinity than most churches combined, notes, “When you even skim the edges of relationship, you submit to mystery and lose control. Marriage would be so much easier if there wasn’t another person involved, but then it would be meaningless, too. Relationships are entwined, entrenched, elusive, messy, enabling, enrapturing, maddening, exhilarating, frustrating, exposing and too beautiful for words. There are moments when we think we have control over our world, and then – whoosh – in comes someone who knocks it completely sideways...”

Richard Rohr, one of the finest contemporary theologians, notes that the depiction of the Trinity as a divine dance, love streaming, moving from one to the other, to and fro, back and forth, day and night, goes back to early Christianity.

In the story of Abraham in the book of Genesis, we learn that the Lord appeared to Abraham and a bit later we learn what Abraham actually experienced was a visit from 3 people. It was during that visit, after Abram and Sarai shared their hospitality, that the promise of a son for them was made and Sarai burst out laughing because they were so old... and they discovered that nothing was impossible for God...

About 13 years ago, Gale Robb & I traveled with a small group from her congregation to Russia to study Orthodox Spirituality. One of the great highlights



was when I stood fixated to my spot in Moscow before The Trinity by Iconographer Andrei Rublev... A true icon invites you in, beyond the lines and colors and shapes on the panel. I have come to love this image and it hangs behind me in my office. It is one of the most beloved and cherished icons in the world.

I invite you to look at it. Can you see the sense of community, of belonging, of intimacy and relationship? It was not until I was preparing this sermon that I noticed the little square on the front side of the table. “Most people just pass right over it, but art historians say that the remaining glue on the original icon indicates that there was perhaps once a mirror glued to the front of the table.” Just think about that! A mirror would be MOST unusual for an icon. It would have been utterly courageous and outside the iconography tradition.

What it tells me and what I want to convey to you is that there was – and there is – room at the table. We are invited to be partners in this divine meal and the divine dance of the Trinity. The circle is not closed. From the very beginning, God’s ultimate intention was that we would see ourselves as a participant in this wondrous table, this divine dance. They are saying to you and to me and to all, come and join us. Be a part of this dance. Share this love. Delight in the creation. Bring hope to another. A word of inspiration to those seeking meaning.

Richard Rohr advocates that what we desperately need in the Church is a “worldwide paradigm shift... regarding how we relate to God.” And he suggests the Trinity offers a key to changing how we understand and talk about God. Christianity is not about a set of beliefs, of saying certain words. Rather it is about discovering and embracing the reality of God dancing and dining with us in all of life.

Rohr says, “Punitive images of God have dominated the Western church” and the one whom we call the Trinity is calling us to see – to see that everything is holy. He advocates this paradigm change because (and I quote), “In my decades of priesthood, I’ve observed that the vast majority of Christians are afraid of God. ... I do not find most Christians to be naturally more loving than those of other faiths. We just think we are! It’s rather disappointing to find this out, but it’s inevitable if you’re basically relating to this God out of fear and if your religion is by and large, fire insurance just in case the whole thing turns out to be real.” (p 47)

Could it be that the greatest dis-ease facing humanity right now is our profound and painful sense of disconnection – disconnection from God, from self, from each other? And could it be that this disconnection is at the root of much ugliness in our world – from political corruption to ecological devastation, from warring against each other and hating each other because of race, gender, religion or sexual identity?

Perhaps the Trinity can help us by reminding us that it is relationship that matters. The one line from Bill Chadwick's sermons that I carry with me as most meaningful is it is the Christian community and the ethics of Jesus that carry him. Relationships matter for in them, we know God, and in them we are known as followers of Christ.

What if we allowed the mystery of relationship with God to show us that everything is holy? What if we embraced the confession from years ago that the chief purpose of our lives is to glorify God AND enjoy God forever? What if we listened to Sophia and come each day with our joyful applause, always enjoying God's company, delighting in the world of things and creatures, happily celebrating the human family?

Rohr notes, "The Triune God allows you, impels you, to live easily with God everywhere and all the time: in the budding of a plant, the smile of a gardener, the excitement of a (teenager over a new love), the tireless determination of a research scientist, the pride of a mechanic over his hidden work under the hood, the loving nuzzling of horses, the tenderness with which eagles feed their chicks, and the downward flow of every mountain.... This God is found even in the suffering and death of those very things. How could this not be the life-energy of God? ... In the chirp of every bird excited about a new morning, in the hard beauty of every sandstone cliff, in the deep satisfaction at every job well done, in the passion of sex, and even in a clerk's gratuitous smile to a customer or in the passivity of the hospital bed, "the world, life or death, the present or the future, all belong to you and you belong to Christ and Christ belongs to God" (p. 38) as Paul says in 1 Corinthians 3. It is one Trinitarian Flow since the beginning." The Divine Dance is ongoing and "God is saving the world, and God goes on working even though we fail to notice, fail to enjoy, fail to pass on, and fail to fully live our one and only life." (p. 39)

(Pause)

And on this Trinity Sunday we are being wooed by divine love to come to the table and see ourselves not only as welcome but as wanted and needed. To see ourselves in that mirror as co-creators of a future that reflects the fullness of God's love. The love is always, always, always flowing with the Trinity and we are invited

to take part, to join this dance and be part of the outflowing of love that will never stop because ultimately love wins!

Thom Schuman says, “The Trinity reaches out in Love, inviting us to dance, to show us those moves called grace, wonder, laughter, peace. They connect with us in Love, taking us by the hand to draw us into the dance, whether we are hurting, or angry, or grieving, or broken, or lost. And they welcome us, enfolding us in Love, as we are taught to dance with abandon, with kindness, with hope, with gentleness. And as we dance, we discover that the Trinity is not so much a doctrine as it is a relationship – with us!” Thanks be to God. Amen.

Sources:

1. The Divine Dance by Richard Rohr
2. Draw Us Into the Dance by Thom M. Schuman