

What's in a name? - Sunday 7th June 2020

- Revd Kit Gunasekera

This morning is Trinity Sunday. When we celebrate the Holy Trinity – the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. It's the last of the special Sundays for a while, and for the next few months, we enter what is known as ordinary time, a time for us to get on with our mission as a church - and we go with today's message about The Trinity, ringing in our ears.

And what is the message – to go and make disciples of all nations – baptising them – in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

And I want to focus briefly, on the phrase –in **the name of the** Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Our names can mean something. I wonder, does your name have a special meaning? If so, use the chat channel to tell me what it means, or if you have come across some meanings to names which you like.

In the times of the bible, often a person's name was more than just a way to identify who they were. It revealed what they were like and who they were.

In the OT, Naomi, which means pleasant, changed her name to Mara, which means bitter, when her husband and sons died.

In the NT - The apostles calls Joseph – Barnabus- which means son of encouragement

Jesus was called – Immanuel – God with us

To go, and baptise in **the name of the** Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, might mean all manner of things, but I want to suggest this - it means doing mission as a church and as individuals, in a way that reveals the true nature of God!

And, what is this nature?

Jill has been using her furloughed time from work to do a short introductory course in positive psychology (I wasn't sure if that was because she was preparing herself to go into isolation with me!) Anyway, on this course they talk about character strengths, there are 24 of them they identify in people, things like, humour, self-discipline, fairness.

There are probably a lot more in the Holy Trinity, but if we were to pick out the top character strength of the father and the son and the Holy Spirit, it would be.... Love.

In 1 John 4 vs 8 it says:

⁸Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love

It's not a new idea, and neither is trying to explain the trinity on Trinity Sunday! To explain the complicated idea of one God revealed in three persons, existing at the same time, in relationship with each other....but I liked the tip I learnt from a church in South Yarra in Australia – which speaks about how the doctrine of the Trinity is a mystery, it always has been, and when the church has traditionally described something as a mystery, there is no need to spend too much energy trying to exhaustively explain it. Richard Rohr says a mystery is not something you cannot understand, it's something you can understand endlessly.

It has to be experienced. Before there was ever a doctrine of the Trinity, there was an experience of the Trinity. The early church experienced God in certain ways, and they attempted to describe their experience.

Karen Armstrong says that we experience the Trinity by doing it.

Quote:

religion is something you *do*, and that you cannot understand the truths of faith unless you are committed to a transformative way of life that takes you beyond the prism of selfishness. All good religious teaching – including such Christian doctrines as the Trinity ...– is basically a summons to action.

And I would add, having it done to us, letting go of our pride to receive.

How do we do it? – again there is no new idea here, Jesus is our example. How did Jesus demonstrate the love of the Trinity? What examples can you give- send them down via the chat channel.

One thing about the love of the Trinity is self-evident, and that is, it is relational. Father and the son and the Holy Spirit, are diverse, different, unique, yet one, dependent on each other, existing mutually, preferring each other, creative, dynamic.

Different. Diverse. One. Harmony. Relationship. This is the force and energy that flung stars into space, and brought our world and us into life. We need to

experience this kind of relational love, let's call it Trinitarian love, over and over and over again.

Particularly in days like these, when we look at the entrenched injustices around us, so horrifically on display in the murder of George Floyd in the USA. We can feel a sense of powerlessness in the face of such stubborn prejudice and the experiences - that have accumulated in society to bring about this act of brutality.

This can be described as the violence of institutions, which Robert Kennedy spoke about, the day after Martin Luther King's assassination. He said: "This is the violence of institutions; indifference and inaction and slow decay. This is the violence that afflicts the poor, that poisons relations between men because their skin has different colours. This is a slow destruction of a child by hunger, and schools without books and homes without heat in the winter. This is the breaking of a man's spirit by denying him the chance to stand as a father and as a man among other men. And this too afflicts us all."

Spoken over 50 years ago, yet hugely relevant today.

But this morning, we are invited to reflect, that This relationship of the Trinity is not a closed one- the whole of life is invited to their table of fellowship. And we are sent out to do so by baptising - meaning by drenching it, overwhelming it, submerging it, in this Trinitarian love.

Bishop Michael Curry – sees hope in the protest marches – and let's remember the US has had a different attitude towards social distancing in this crisis- endorsed by their president – Bishop Curry sees signs of hope, because they are young, and multi-racial and multi ethnic. – standing side by side with your sister and your brother, when it does not affect you directly- this is Trinitarian love.

When I see a white girl shielding a black boy from the police - When I see pictures of kneeling policemen and policewomen asking for forgiveness of the protesters, and the protesters reaching out their hands in friendship - this too is Trinitarian love.

But we must also look to our own institution, the church.

Archbishop John Sentamu retires next week, I read in the church times, that one person had asked at the time - couldn't they find a white man?

We must ask questions of how welcoming and inclusive the church is. Not just on race, but also in terms of gender, sexuality, disability in every area. I hope St

James is a place where anyone who seeks to receive and offer God's love, would feel welcome. To pursue this too, is Trinitarian love.

Trinitarian love, compels us to watch out for each other, as the restrictions relax, and we are allowed to go out more. We must take care, of ourselves, for the sake of others, especially for the sake of the unfittest. Inside the bible Donald Trump held so shamelessly as a prop last week, it is very clear that God is squarely on the side of the unfittest in society. And He is **very** interested in their survival.

The final word on what it means to go in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, belongs to Bishop Michael Curry, answering a question about what he would say to the protesters protesting the sin of racism.

Watch video

May that be the message that rings in our ears, as we protest, or just as we go to work, or stay at home, or go to learn, and care, and shop, and befriend, and share, - in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Amen.