

A Meditation for June 12/22, 'Trinity Sunday' – pg. 1

By the Rev. Warren Ball of Mt. Albert United Church

Hello and welcome to my meditation for this week, the week of Trinity Sunday. Before all that is was, there was God: Creator; Eternal, life-giving Spirit of Meaning! So, come, let us turn now to that God in worship that we may lay down all that would hold us back, and that, freed, we may be strengthened to better carry God's love to the world! Let's begin our journey by turning to God in prayer:

**Glory to you God, Beginning and End, Creator and Companion, Three-in-One!
Come alive for us in our worship now, show us how to make a positive difference in the world, and open our spirits to your prompting! Amen.**

⇒ Hymn suggestion: VU 312 'Praise with Joy the World's Creator'

Today's Scripture reading: from Romans 5:1-5 'Justification' (NRSV)

The Apostle Paul wrote these words: Therefore, since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have obtained access to this grace in which we stand; and we boast in our hope of sharing the glory of God.

And not only that, but we also boast in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us."

Sermon: 'One for All and All for One'

Eternal God – Creator, Sustainer and Redeemer: grant us now a fuller vision and a deeper intuition that we may better take up the place you would have us take in life, amen.

I read this week of a minister who, while at a conference on preaching made quite the comment to a friend. He said, "You know, Sunday sermons are just about the hardest thing that I have to face! I mean, who am I to hold up 'Good News' for people when I would give just about anything to hear God call me by name?"

Of course, 'hearing' is not always as simple as it may seem, is it? There's literal hearing – the sounds that we hear with our ears. But there are also non-physical sounds (lots of them!) that we can metaphorically 'hear,' or discern, with our spirits. Have you ever heard God call you by name? I pray that you have but, even if you have, chances are that, just like that minister at the conference, you've also known long periods of silence, silence when you'd give just about anything to hear God call you by name. Oh, how we need voices of direction, how we need voices of meaning, how we need voices of hope! This is Trinity Sunday, a special Sunday in the Christian calendar that's all about God's identity. Now there's a subject that, over the

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centuries, has filled thousands upon thousands of books with fine speculation! But I wonder, have we made things too heavenly-minded to be of any earthly use? I wonder, have we needlessly crowded out God's voice with all of our insatiable needs?

You know, when I was at seminary, I came across some very fancy words on this subject – I'm thinking here of 'perichoresis.' Perichoresis is a word from the Ancient Greek that refers to the mutual indwelling of the three Divine 'persons' – what, in traditional terms, we've known as God the Father, our Creator, God the Son, our Redeemer, and God the Holy Spirit, our Sustainer. But even armed with such a fancy term as perichoresis, how can we really hope to understand this mystical, word-defying, mind-boggling three-in-oneness? I mean, who's the real boss, the one who's really in control? And, if we pray to just one of them, will the other two get offended and work against our prayers? How do we understand God's mutuality when there's nothing else like it in the whole wide world? Well, to my mind, there's a far more important question to ask on Trinity Sunday, and it goes this way: how can we ego-centred, error-prone, self-absorbed humans ever hope to understand God in the first place?

An inter-disciplinary team of scientists once gathered together and, oh, what a gathering it was! There were biologists and chemists, there were scientists and engineers, there were cosmologists and geneticists. Well, after working together for many months, this illustrious group of people made the proud announcement to the world that they had finally solved the mystery of life! In fact, they said that, now, they could make life itself! God came along, saying, "That's most interesting! Now, how do you propose to do that?"

- "Well," the team of scientists responded, "First of all, we start with some proto-life material."
- "Excuse me," interrupted God, "You do what?"
- "Oh, we start with some proto-life material – ordinary old dirt will do!"
- "Hey, said God, I made that dirt, you go make your own!"

Not for a moment do I believe that we can ever really hope to 'figure it all out.' Surely that's one the grandest illusions that we humans have ever held – that we can take things apart, measure all the elements, and then figure out the rules by which everything is governed. We humans have thereby come to believe that we have the god-like ability to manage life all by ourselves. Oh, what a world of grief has come, and continues to come, from that misguided notion!

Speaking of measurements, it seems to me that, among the world of deeply theological discoveries that post-modern science has made, is a radical new understanding of what's involved in 'measurement.' The great Danish physicist, and one-time associate of Albert Einstein, Niels Bohr, discovered that, in terms of quantum physics, measurement can be neither absolute nor consistent. He found that if we chart the direction in which an electron is going, then we can't know where it now is. And, if we know where an electron is, then we can't find out where it's going! Do you want to hear something even stranger? Niels Bohr also discovered that we can't even measure the location of an electron without our own subjectivity

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having an impact on those measurements. Which means that we can never know how an electron might behave if we weren't watching it! By way of summary, Niels Bohr made this stunning comment, "Anyone who is not shocked by quantum physics has not understood it!" (quoted in Barbara Brown Taylor's *The Luminous Web*, p. 50). Well, whether we understand it or not, whether it's comforting or frightening, whether we use it as a prompt for personal growth, or whether we use it as an excuse to 'shut-down' and lean back into what we've always believed, the fact is that God is Emmanuel, and God, although infinitely beyond our understanding, nevertheless chooses to be one-with-us – to be 'knowable' at our own level!

That's part of what Paul was getting at in his letter to the Romans. Paul wrote that, in the life, ministry, death, and resurrection of Jesus, God would have us see, and come to know something, of heaven's peace right here on earth. Paul wrote that we can share in the very glory of God, despite everything in our lives that is far from glorious. Paul wrote that God would help us through whatever happens to us, help us to build endurance, so that endurance may produce character, and character may produce hope – a hope that will never let us go! The community that is God will also spark a yearning for community in us. You see, in our inter-connectedness with God we can come to find something of God in everything that's around us – EVERYTHING! And, there, we can also find a unity without losing anything of our own individuality. There we can find a breath-taking freedom where, paradoxically, in submission to God's love, we can come to know a sharing that is so radical that we all become 'as one' – one for all and all for one, just as the famous Three Musketeers used to proclaim. One where we'll be stronger in the community of God that we ever could be on our own. One where we can know more comfort together in the community of God that we ever could on our own. One where (sometimes!) we can even hear God calling us by name.

Thanks be to God? Oh, yes; thanks be to God, amen

Come, let us turn back to God now in prayer; come, let us pray:

Glory to you, Creator God, for you spoke and light came out of darkness. Glory to you, Jesus our Christ, for you turned God's Word into flesh and blood, showing us the Way and the Truth and the Life. Glory to you, Holy Spirit (She Who Is), for you constantly weave a whole new web of meaning around us. Glory to you, God the Trinity for, even though we can't possibly hope to understand you, you still seek us out in relationship!

We praise you, O God, for your self-revelation throughout life, and we are in wonder that you have chosen to be one with us. In you, God, our spirits breathe, in you, our minds find maturity, in you our hopes reside and our fears melt – help us to hear your voice this day, and forever!

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We pray now for all who are facing difficulty this day. We pray, too, for all the places where there's difficulty. We especially pray once again for the people of Ukraine, that peace come and that justice may be brought to bear!

In the silence of the next moments, O God, receive the deep burdens that our spirits bear today:
moment of silence.

All that I have named with my words, all that lies yet too deep for words to touch, we bring to you, God, as we take those words that Jesus once taught us and pray together the traditional spoken version of Christ's Prayer (VU921):

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.

**Thy kingdom come, thy will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.**

**Give us this day our daily bread
and forgive us our trespasses
as we forgive those who trespass against us.**

**And lead us not into temptation
but deliver us from evil
for thine is the Kingdom, and the power, and the glory,
forever and ever, amen.**

⇒ Hymn suggestion: VU 330 'Jesus Shall Reign'

May the Gifted One relieve you,
may the Given One retrieve you,
and may the Giving One receive you, Three-in-One, joy in life unending!
Amen.