

How do we see? Do we see with our eyes, or our hearts or even our ear? And how do we respond to what we see. This week we have witnessed protests across the USA as well as in our own country in response the murder George Floyd. The grief in this situation however is that this is not about the death of one man but rather systemic and imbedded ongoing discrimination within our society.

One of the most challenging parts of bringing change is that it takes every one of us to recognise the unconscious and even conscious ways that we discriminate against each other. It requires us to notice the voices in our head when we see someone, what assumptions do we make. It requires us to not only see with our eyes but with our hearts and conscience.

Change requires everyone to evaluate the attitude we bring to all relationships. It is too easy for us in our safe and diverse community to assume that this challenge is not directed at us – but it is! We all have to change, the system has to change, and the way for this to start is for us to acknowledge the small ways we discriminate against others – because so often we do this not out of malice or intent – but through assumptions and good intentions!

Today we mark Trinity Sunday – the day in the church calendar when we acknowledge the three fold nature – or three dimensions of God. Now at one level we do this every time we pray – but on this Sunday in the church year we are invited to mark that it has been an important development in Christian theology and Christology. It is so easy for the mention of the Trinity to be about doctrine – but that is to lose the point – for the trinity is about relationship! It about our interrelationships with God and with one another.

The notion of the term trinity emerged in the early church as a way of trying to grapple with a monotheistic belief in one God in light of the early church actual, lived experience of God’s activity powerfully in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus and after an encounter with the power of the Holy Spirit. The Trinity provided an answer...of sorts. An answer often couched in the language of fourth-century metaphysics. Sometimes because of this, somewhere along the way the Trinity became less about describing an experience of the living God and more about accepting doctrines of God’s church¹.

But there is so much about the trinity which is about the way we see. When I look at a person I may not see the same person that you see. It will depend on the things we know about each other, our life experiences, even our hopes. When we look at one relationship we too experience and see many different things. In some many ways the notion of the trinity is about trying to help us explain and explore the complex relationship with God in its many different expressions, and in turn our relationships with others.

¹ <http://www.davidlose.net/2016/05/trinity-c-shh-dont-mention-the-trinity/>

This is what the early church were trying to achieve when they wrote about the Trinity – they were trying to describe their different experiences of God – no longer a God who was only creator of the universe – but now a God they had met in Jesus, as well as a God they had felt and experienced in the Holy Spirit.

So much is happened in the last week it can be difficult to consider what to focus our prayer on, what to reflect on, what to take to God. We live in strange and sometimes confusing times, and so our interrelationship with God needs to help us see and encounter not only our faith, but the world in new and insightful ways – and in many ways this takes confidence. With a constant changing landscape around us, socially and politically our relationship with God needs to remain constant, even in the way we relate to God changes.

In some ways this is what Jesus is trying to prepare the disciples for in Matthew today. Today we hear Jesus last advice to his followers before he leaves them. He invites them to enter fully into this relationship, to engage with the spirit that they might come to know God more, and that others too might come to know God through Jesus Christ. This requires confidence in what we believe and to have courage to explore the questions which we find most difficult. Jesus knew the disciples would face many changes in the days ahead.

Matthew 28.16-20 provides the narrative of the last recorded encounter of Jesus by the disciples and the final words of Jesus close the Gospel. Directed to return to Galilee where Jesus would meet up with them, the disciples followed yet again, not knowing what they would encounter. Galilee was where it all began and Galilee, it seems, would mark the new beginning. (The full circle so to speak). It is difficult to imagine what their journey was like, but it had to have been a memorable one. It was the ultimate road trip, filled with long conversations that focused upon making sense of the mind-bending events that had transpired, wondering aloud what would happen next. This moment with Jesus would be an important time for them. They had lost everything in the catastrophic events that preceded this, and they were on their way to discover what, if anything would be next.

Jesus' parting words are commonly referred to as the Great Commission. But the reference of the text is much broader. The text frames the basis for the communal identity and life together for the movement that will become the church.

The commission is for all who are part of the people of God and incorporates the task of making disciples with teaching and baptizing as the movement expands around the world. The church is at its core to be living out the teachings of Jesus as a witness within their world. And perhaps most profoundly of all, Jesus promises that his presence will be with his people until the final culmination of the ages – a presence of the kingdom of God.

In this we hear and encounter the dance of the Trinity again, that relationship of the spirit inspiring us to tell of our encounter with Jesus that helps us to understand more fully the nature of God the creator; that is ever present till the end of time.

All relationships take energy and conversation. We have to work on our relationship with God and with each other, this is what being a Christian community means. It is also about the dance of story – how we tell of our encounter with God. How do we describe it? Are we able to notice the work of the Holy Spirit within us, or those around us? Are we able to acknowledge God in our midst? Are we able to see each other as God see us? The reminder of the trinity is to remind us that God is complex and encompassing, but it is a life we have each been called to follow.

A couple of years ago I was taken by a description of what a Trinitarian community might look like – I think it is worth sharing again. David Lose said that being a Trinitarian community is a community striving to be a place that knows it doesn't have all the answers, and so consequently makes space for conversation and values those who are bring different voices and experiences into its midst. Conversation, valuing difference, being inclusive – these things aren't easy, but genuine community, while challenging, is also creative, productive, and enriching – a solid relationship in which we find wisdom about God and ourselves².

I think this also says something to us about the way that we change our behaviour and address discrimination. To fully engage with God as trinity we need to be open to the fullness of all that is created. To be a just society we need to be open to all who are created are God, seen as equal by God, valued in all our diversity. To do this we need to truly be open to see each other and make space to hear when we get it wrong. And if this scares us, maybe we can take courage from the lovely passage we heard from Isaiah this morning *He gives power to the faint, and strengthens the powerless. Even youths will faint and be weary, and the young will fall exhausted; but those who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint. (Isaiah 40.30)*

In the end what trinity marks is our hope for the Kingdom of God, the endless relationship and interrelationship with God and each other – relationships based on equality and justice. On this Trinity Sunday we are invited to have courage to examine our relationships, to recognise if there are attitudes and practices we need to change, and to allow God draw us in more fully to be the Kingdom of God on earth – where all are made in the image of God. Amen

² www.davidlose.net/2016/05/trinity-c-shh-dont-mention-the-trinity