

# Trinity Sunday 2017

## The Great Hinge!

St. John 3: 1-15

St. Andrew's Church - Jacksonville, OR

by Rev. Mr. Bill Baker

*"Verily, Verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God...except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God...We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen; and ye receive not our witness."*

Today marks a pivotal point in the Christian year; a hinge, if you will that allows us to enter into another mode of living were we can rely on what we have learned as we exercise our faith by following the leadings of the Holy Spirit. Last Sunday Deacon Chris summarized very well our journeys by way of the doctrinal seasons of Advent through the Ascension. Without first going through these seasons there would be no reason to apply ourselves to the upcoming season of Trinity. As Chris implied, the Anglican Church is fortunate to have maintained her traditional heritage of the Liturgy; a liturgy that guides us without excuse to examine our relationship with the Godhead...a misfortunate loss for so many of today's religious establishments. Today is Trinity Sunday and the culmination of the great doctrines of the Church. Today stands alone, between the great doctrines, which discern our understanding of God, and our practical duties to our God.

To begin to understand the Trinity it was necessary to begin in Advent. It was in Advent after all where we were able to see the revelation of God Almighty as he entered the human race becoming incarnate in a babe named Jesus. The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us! It is truly incredible and yet it is precisely this miraculous move by God...that sets up THE significant move for us. God, in his humanity would suffer death. What a truly awful time this must have been for those on the front lines...the dead human body of Jesus laid in a tomb. Hope seemingly lost. But it was in this moment where everything changed! It is this moment that separates Christianity from all other religions. The dead human body of Jesus Christ...was resurrected...

freeing all of humanity! The Easter celebration is significant because the humanity, which was assumed by God in Jesus, is redeemed and resurrected. Death no longer has a hold on those in Christ Jesus. And it is in the Ascension where we see the culmination of God's redeeming grace when we witness the glorious bodily ascension of Jesus Christ to the right hand of the Father. All that is assumed by Christ is redeemed.

And last Sunday, as we witnessed the tongues of fire, the descending of the Holy Spirit, we felt the sacrificial grace of God through the Son Jesus Christ as the spirit of God entered humanity and the Holy Spirit became God in us and we entered into the fullness of God himself. The Holy Trinity...expressed so thoroughly through the seasons of our Anglican Church life; the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost.

The truth of the Godhead in the unity of three persons is well depicted through the seasons of the church...but, can we find solid examples elsewhere? I believe we can. Right from the start the scriptures begin pointing the way. In the Old Testament, within the first 26 verses of Genesis chapter 1 we find the Holy Trinity in action. *"In the beginning God created the Heavens and the earth"* (the Father creates everything). *"And the Spirit moved upon the face of the waters"* (The Holy Spirit is involved in creation). *"And God **said** let there be light: and there was light"* (Creation by a spoken word). *"And God said let us make man in our image"* (an indication of plurality). Here we see the different persons of the Trinity in equal cooperation in the creation of the world; God the Father creating, the Holy Spirit moving upon the creation permeating the creation with the Will of the Father and the very words of God speaking that creation into existence through the pre-incarnate Son who would one day have to redeem this same creation. Scripture starts at the very beginning of creation and at the beginning we find the Trinity in eternal existence.

And this is not lost in the Gospels. In the first chapter of the Gospel of John, we read that, *"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was God, and the Word was with God"* (the eternal existence of Jesus). *"All things were made by Him; and without Him was not any thing made that was made"* (The Word is outside of creation and did not create itself). *"And the WORD BECAME FLESH and dwelt among us and we beheld His glory"* (His deity was not changed but **our nature was added to it** in

the person of Jesus Christ). This is important because it illustrates that nothing was lost in the DIVINE becoming incarnate in the man Jesus. The divine is adding creation to himself and that becomes our path to salvation. The correlation of New Testament reasoning in the understanding of the Trinity, with that of the Old Testament account of creation, together supply enough evidence to the concept of Trinitarian Theology to draw a firm conclusion that at the very beginning of the Christian Church Jesus was seen as God and the second person of the Trinity.

Let's carry this a step further. Among the Old Testament writings and the New Testament Gospels, are other New Testament writers who support and maintain the same claim of Jesus' oneness with God. The Apostle Paul, in Colossians 1, asserts in definite terms that Jesus is the image of the invisible God by whom all things were created when he personifies Jesus as the one *"In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins: Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature..."* (Vs. 14-15). Hebrews 1 (Paul?) again points to Jesus as God's express image and heir of all things:

*God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds; Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high.* (Vs. 1-3)

Here we see the Son as the final revelation spoken of through the prophets; the Old Covenant is fulfilled in Jesus and we have entered the last days.

Through the combined efforts of Genesis 1, John 1, Colossians 1 and Hebrews 1 we can see Jesus present from the very creation of the world to his ascension containing within himself the invisible image of God and upholding all things as he deals with our inequities and restores all things to their rightful states. Jesus contains all the glories of the Father and is adequate to be the atonement for all mankind's sins.

(I know this is some deep stuff but bare with me...we are almost done.)

As New Testament revelation opens our eyes to Old Covenant pictures, we can almost feel the excitement as early church theologians began to put the pieces into place. It was Tertullian, in the primitive church, who first used the term 'Trinity' to explain the Godhead and was the first to describe it: these are the words of Tertullian, *"Thus the connection of the Father in the Son, and of the Son in the Paraclete (the Holy Spirit), produces three coherent Persons, who are yet distinct one from another. These Three are one essence, not one Person..."* Here we see the revelation of Jesus being a person within the Godhead with the same essence as God the Father, yet unique. This focus of Christianity has been present from the beginning of the apostolic age despite the language barrier to explain this complexity of the church. In the early church people were baptized in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit pointing to what would become known as the Trinity. While the term may not have evolved for some time, the concept has always been there between the lines.

The season of Trinity is a stepping out, trusting in the Triune God as we live lives that reflect our Fathers Will, our Saviors redemption and the Holy Spirits guidance. "Draw near with faith and take this Holy Sacrament to your comfort" knowing that Christ is in you and you are in him.

In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.