

**Sermon**  
**June 12, 2022**  
**Calvary Lutheran Church, Morro Bay**  
**Holy Trinity Sunday**  
**Proverbs 8:1-4, 22-31; John 16: 12-15**

The original draft of this sermon was quite light-hearted, having to do with the difficulty of defining the Holy Trinity to a satisfactory extent, and the presumption that a preacher must employ to talk about the inner workings of God, the Three in One. But today, in light of all that is currently assailing us in the world and personal relationships and in our own minds, I want to say, that however we might want to talk about the Trinity, we know and have faith that God the Trinity is truly present, active and powerful among us who confess it. We can rely on God, Creator, Redeemer and Comforter as surely as we rely on our own breath and heartbeat. Actually, more than that, since both breath and heartbeat sometimes fail us. We believe in the Trinity because that is how we and others before us have come to know we are definitely not alone.

The main work of evil is to make us believe that there is no God, and if there is, we have been essentially abandoned by God. This is NOT TRUE. Some philosophers, some politicians, some world leaders may be functional or outright atheists, who consider that the levers of history are pulled entirely by humans, for the purposes of aggrandizement and fame. We will always see this. It has ever been so. The snake of the Garden of Eden still lives.

But our confidence is that through God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, death and despair and terminal anxiety are all defeated. They are around us still, but they limp, even if they crow. Their boasting is empty to its core. So on this day of the Holy Trinity, in utter seriousness and joy, I proclaim that we never have been, nor ever will be, abandoned unto ourselves. This is why we meet together, pray together, commune together, testify together, rejoice together, along with

all of the other meeting, praying testifying, rejoicing groups in the world. Victory is ours. The battle is won. Here is the rest of my sermon.

To continue, I'd like to return to the first lesson read by Joyce, from Proverbs. This is the introduction in Scripture of Wisdom, personified. In Hebrew, *hokmah*. In Greek, *sophia*. A woman, it turns out. Wisdom evidently likes talking. She has a lot to say, and it is all good.

In my big dictionary, Wisdom means being wise in conduct, and choosing well between means and ends, with the combination of experience and knowledge, and the ability to apply them judiciously, with sound judgement, prudence, and practical sense. I like Wisdom already. On my better days, I want her to come to dinner and have a long conversation afterwards. On my worse days, I will avoid her like the plague.

As Christians, we come to see Wisdom as, well, the Holy Spirit, who counsels us, guides us, consoles us, informs us, brings us to faith.

In Proverbs Chapter 8, we also hear that Wisdom was present at Creation, actually before Creation, and like a great architect, helped God the Creator with the plans and the execution of them. Now Wisdom is looking more like a good dinner guest. I could get all of my deep questions asked. Why this and why that? For instance, was evil in your great plan? You've probably already noticed that another person we're familiar with was also present at creation, as is written in the first chapter of John, In the beginning was the...Word. Meaning Jesus. Meaning the Son.

So you see, what was for the Israelites Wisdom, a part of God's court, so to speak, becomes for us, with the coming of Jesus and later the Holy Spirit, the Holy Trinity. Beyond that conclusion, I can't explain much to you. I've heard it said that the "persons" of the Trinity are always talking with one another. Consulting? Cajoling? Joking? I really don't know. Being

as I've experienced all three parts of the Trinity, I sense they're in communication. That's good. But throughout our life of belief, I don't think that, even though we may have a rudimentary understanding of the whole system, we are ever in any sense in command of its workings.

For some years, I have been attracted to an ancient compilation of poems, related to the Chinese tradition called Taoism, titled the *Tao te Ching*. *The Book of the Way and Virtue* is one translation of the title. Which is to say, an explanation of the ways things are, based on the idea that at the center of life is the Way, which energizes everything, moves everything, but is entirely outside our ability to manipulate it, to own it, or to use it for our own purposes. Kind of like the Serenity Prayer by Reinhold Niebuhr, "God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, courage to changes the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference." Acknowledging at the same time that the list of things I cannot change is larger by an order of magnitude than the list of things I can change.

So we probably cannot manipulate God or any person of the Trinity, nor get any of them to do our will, nor, perhaps, to plunge their depths. Abraham Lincoln, in his Second Inaugural Address, near the very end of the Civil War, and doing his best to explain it, said of the two sides in the conflict,

Both read the same Bible and pray to the same God,  
and each invokes His aid against the other.  
It may seem strange that any men should dare to ask a just God's assistance  
in wringing their bread from the sweat of other men's faces,  
but let us judge not, that we be not judged.  
The prayers of both could not be answered.  
That of neither has been answered fully.  
The Almighty has His own purposes.

If God, then, will act as God is going to act, what is our role? My suggestion this morning is to join the dance of the Trinity. My father, who was primarily serious, even in his joking, because of his life-long underlying anxiety and unsettledness – well, after he and my

mom were divorced, he found a social life at dance halls. You know fancy dancing – foxtrot and the lot, AND swing. He met Margaret, at one of them, Margaret who also loved to dance. They got married, and to see them on the dance floor, it was a revelation. My father became light on his feet, deferential, kind, smiling, loose, tickled, giggly. He lost his sorrow for those moments. My stepmother says that when they went on cruises, which was frequent enough, he would dance with all of the women. He was tireless. I suspect that dancing, for him, was about as close to heaven that he came to on this earth.

So I am suggesting that our relationship with the Trinity should not have to be serious, or introspective, or probing, but rather can be joyful engagement. Again, this is why watching *The Chosen* is so fun, because Jesus is joyful, engaging, joking, light-hearted, even in an atmosphere of impending deadly seriousness.

In preparation for this sermon, I looked up what dancing is. I know, it's self-evident. But let's unpack it. It's rhythm, a beat, an order, coupled with free or ordered bodily expression. Dance communicates emotions, it's a physical release. It is transcendent of everyday life, it creates community, it tells stories. Here's my favorite quote. It can express complex ideas!

We can think of a few examples of dancing in the Bible. King David, after his forces had captured Jerusalem, as they were bringing in the Ark of the Covenant from its previous home in a tent, well, he preceded it, dancing up the streets. He might have taken his robe and cloak off. He was in ecstasy.

Or, the wedding at Cana, which, for heaven's sake, should have included dancing, celebrating the marriage, of persons unnamed. Group, untethered dancing, I'm thinking. Honoring God, honoring the community that was being bound in the marriage.

Or the party in the parable of the Lost Son who returned, whose father celebrated his return. We know there was music, so by extension, dancing! Happy, exultant, radiant dancing, reflecting the happiness and exultation of the relieved parent.

OK, I don't know entirely how this dancing with the Trinity works. But it can be actual dancing. Holy Trinity Lutheran Church in Thousand Oaks, in Southern California, for instance. If you attend a certain one of the worship services there, the contemporary one, I think, you will see, off on the side of the wide sanctuary, a man dancing during every piece of music. It makes me smile. At our former congregation, Trinity Lutheran Church in Oakland, whenever we would sing that Jewish inspired hymn, "Open Your Ears O Faithful People," Beth Elliott would get up and dance like she were at the wedding of Cana. Arms up, clapping in rhythm, whooping. If you attend a God-filled African-American worship service, the choir doesn't just sing, they dance, they move.

Dancing is freeing, using the aspects of body, action, space, time and energy. That's also how the Trinity works in our world. Taking form in bodies, performing loving actions, moving around in space, working over the course of time, infusing us with energy. Do you feel this while you are sitting and standing in worship, singing, listening, remembering, watching children, tasting and eating, seeing visions? This is part of the dance!

I was in eighth grade when my mother joined other mothers (I'm expecting it was all mothers who were the influencers) in enrolling me in social dance class at the local large Congregational Church. They had a big auditorium, and I don't know why a church provided this program, and hey, it wasn't so bad! Young women lined up on one side, young men on the other. The box step, the traveling box step, the cha-cha, I don't remember what else. But what I will never get out of my mind was the music that played while we were gathering. Pretty new at

that time, the beginning of the real sixties, “Get Together” by the Youngbloods. “Love is but a song we sing/Fear’s the way we die./You can make the mountains sing/or make the angels cry./Though the bird is on the wing/And you may not know why./Come on people now,/Smile on your brother/Everybody get together/Try to love one another right now.”

I didn’t realize until now the Christian complex ideas in the song: The primacy of love, the importance of community, human freedom...in the last verse, “When the one that left us here/Returns to us at last.” Yes, dancing, social or otherwise, is a proper response to the wonder and mystery of the Trinity. And it is a way to survive, in grace. C’mon people now. Try to dance with the triune God – and each other – right now. For all of our sakes. Amen.

Rev. Brian Stein-Webber, June 11, 2022