

Prayer for Illumination

Loving God, open our hearts and minds to what you would say to us this day. By your Spirit, we ask that you would speak, as we, your people, are listening. Amen.

Genesis 1:1-5, 24-27, 31

¹ When God began to create the heavens and the earth— ² the earth was without shape or form, it was dark over the deep sea, and God’s wind swept over the waters— ³ God said, “Let there be light.” And so light appeared. ⁴ God saw how good the light was. God separated the light from the darkness. ⁵ God named the light Day and the darkness Night. There was evening and there was morning: the first day.

(After the 5th Day)

²⁴ God said, “Let the earth produce every kind of living thing: livestock, crawling things, and wildlife.” And that’s what happened. ²⁵ God made every kind of wildlife, every kind of livestock, and every kind of creature that crawls on the ground. God saw how good it was. ²⁶ Then God said, “Let us make humanity in our image to resemble us so that they may take charge of the fish of the sea, the birds in the sky, the livestock, all the earth, and all the crawling things on earth.”

²⁷ God created humanity in God’s own image,
in the divine image God created them,
male and female God created them.

... ³¹ God saw everything he had made: it was supremely good.
There was evening and there was morning: the sixth day.

Matthew 28:16-20

¹⁶ Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus told them to go. ¹⁷ When they saw him, they worshipped him, but some doubted. ¹⁸ Jesus came near and spoke to them, “I’ve received all authority in heaven and on earth. ¹⁹ Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ teaching them to obey everything that I’ve commanded you. Look, I myself will be with you every day until the end of this present age.”

holy mystery

Trinity Sunday is always tricky. There are quite literally thousands of ways to get the Trinity of God *wrong*. And it is very frequently how these conversations go. Because the one way to not get it wrong even a little at all is to just hold the sentence “God is a triune being, as Creator, Son, and Spirit, one God.” And leaving it at that. No more questions, no further explanations, nothing crazy. Just drop it.

Now, that isn't where we get to stop though. Because the trinitarian nature of our God is fundamental to our faith, our religious beliefs, and our community. Our culture also *wants* to understand things. We *want* to know the best language for concepts, and to teach them to others knowing that we have a total grasp on the understanding of what we're teaching. These are all issues that arise when we try to explain the Trinity to other people. To be fair, it gets really mean and scary as soon as you stray from the perfect path of explaining the Triune God, 3 in 1, 1 in 3. People start throwing around scary words like "heresy" and yelling about different creeds, councils, and excommunications. People feel quite strongly about the Trinity for it being something no one does a great job of explaining in understandable terms. A lot of the time, you'll hear 3 main problematic ways of explaining the Trinity. Water, Sun, and a Clover

Water: liquid, ice, steam= modalism (not 3 persons, but 3 forms) H₂O can not exist as liquid and ice and steam at the same time, God is 3 distinct persons, not 3 distinct forms of one being.

Sun: star, light, heat= arianism (Christ and Spirit only come *from* the Creator) the light and the heat of the sun are not the sun itself.

Clover: 3 leaves, one plant= partialism (3 parts of God, combining to make one whole God) this is similar to the other two, but is basically thinking of superheroes combining powers to make one Ultra Superhero! But this creates "parts" of God. God does not have parts, God is persons.

The Presbyterian Church USA uses a Book of Confessions to base our denominational belief on. 2 of those Confessions state (more) clearly what we believe.

Second Helvetic Confession

5.015 GOD IS ONE. We believe and teach that God is one in essence or nature, subsisting in himself, all sufficient in himself, invisible, incorporeal, immense, eternal, Creator of all things both visible and invisible, the greatest good, living, quickening and preserving all things, omnipotent and supremely wise, kind and merciful, just and True.

5.016 GOD IS THREE. Notwithstanding we believe and teach that the same immense, one and indivisible God is in person inseparably and without confusion distinguished as Father, Son and Holy Spirit so, as the Father has begotten the Son from eternity, the Son is begotten by an ineffable generation, and the Holy Spirit truly proceeds from them both, and the same from eternity and is to be worshipped with both.

Westminster Confession

6.013 3. In the unity of the Godhead there be three Persons of one substance, power, and eternity: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost. The Father is of none, neither begotten nor proceeding; the Son is eternally begotten of the Father; the Holy Ghost eternally proceeding from the Father and the Son.

So, how do we talk about God, how do we explain this one in three, three in one business in a way people understand without just throwing a Book of Confessions at anyone? Analogies aren't great, and degrade quickly as we've seen. So, we turn to the arts... as one often does when words don't bring something justice. If you see the halfsheet of paper in your bulletin, that is a front and back depiction of 2 versions of the Trinity as understood by Hannah Garrity, one of the artists at the Sanctified Art group. Her artist statement is written on the cover of your bulletin as well, for this piece. She writes,

"The concept of the perichoresis, three human figures representing the trinity in an equal dance, draws me in. Perhaps I love it because of its physical representation of balance. Maybe I am called to it because of its humanness. Or maybe I am intrigued by the visual energy this idea creates, even on a two dimensional plane. Capturing God's greatness on a flat plane is inherently challenging! In these meditations on Trinity, I was moved to use the style of Chinese brush painting. Working in ink on watercolor paper, my goal was to represent the movement in each trio of dancers' bodies using only one brush stroke per dancer. For me, the result is contemplative and beautiful, simple and strong."

Hannah has found the metaphor of dance as a captivating representation of the Trinity instead of an analogy to some aspect or object within our very limiting human worlds. I deeply love this metaphor and concept. And perhaps it is because I am not a particularly skilled dancer, and therefore do not have any understanding of *how* and *why* dance looks so fluid and graceful sometimes while being harsh and emotional other times. While considering all of that, there are countless numbers of ways for 3 people to dance together. There are countless interpretations, emotions, images, timings, etc, etc, etc to be included into those countless dances. Our God, in trinity, 3 in 1 and 1 in 3 is perfect. There are countless ways to understand this Trinity and countless ways for God to exist in our lives. God is bigger than our human understanding which is an overwhelmingly beautiful thing because we are not in charge of God or their presentation in the world. It is not our business.

What *is* our business is to know God, even in all of our overwhelming human misunderstandings, to know God, to love God, and to show others God. We don't have to understand everything to follow God. We aren't perfect, and that is okay. Because God *is* perfect. God is *good*. And God is our Creator, our Redeemer, and our Sustainer.