

Sermon for Online Service: Pott Shrigley 7 June 2020. Rev David Swales

Living the Trinity

Today we are remembering Christian brothers and sisters in many parts of the world who suffer for their faith, and the work of Open Doors and Barnabas Fund who support them. But today is also Trinity Sunday, when Christians celebrate the extraordinary, mysterious, profound truth that God has revealed Himself as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. In a moment we will confess this belief in our creed.

It wasn't planned that these two themes would come together today. But actually I think they go together well.

People sometimes get stuck when they think about the Trinity: how can God be 'three Persons, yet one God'? But the truth is that the Trinity is not a doctrinal or mathematical problem to be solved: it is a reality of God to be lived. And we most truly live that reality when, like our persecuted brothers and sisters, it is all that we have to hold on to.

In the Bible there is no mention of the word Trinity – nor is there talk of God being 'three Persons yet one God'; these terms were coined later, when our creeds were written – and yet the entire Bible story is the story of the Trinity; and it is in that story, as people encounter Him, serve Him, worship Him, listen to Him, that they find themselves encountering Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

In the earliest pages we see the God who creates the world, and who goes on to forge a special relationship with humanity: His covenant with Abraham and Noah, the Law given through Moses, His word spoken through the prophets.

When we get to the New Testament, we find this God - mighty, mysterious, powerful, yet loving, tender, forgiving – given the name Father. That is the name Jesus uses for Him. But Jesus doesn't just give us a new name for God: He reveals God in His own person, too: as people encounter Him, initially as teacher, friend, master, they gradually become aware that they are in the presence of God Himself: perhaps they don't understand how He can be both God and Man – but by drawing close to Him they come to know it is so.

And so it is also with the Holy Spirit. We remembered last week that the Holy Spirit came and filled the disciples, giving them strength and boldness to preach the Gospel. Yet over time they came to realise that this power which dwelt within them was no mere spiritual energy drink, it was the presence of God Himself, filling them, empowering them, transforming them.

God doesn't ask you this morning, via intellectual gymnastics, to fathom the Trinity – the 3-in-1: rather, like God's faithful people across the centuries, and across the world today, he invites you to enter fully into His life; into a relationship with the Father, through the Son in the power of the Holy Spirit.