

# Christ Church West Wimbledon

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Sermon 12 June 2022 Trinity Sunday

## The Trinity

**12 June 2022, Romans 5:1-5 and John 16:12-15**

This week I attended no less than three funerals. The deceased were not people I already knew - my own family and friends – but I was there as part of my training to conduct funerals myself. Nevertheless, very emotional occasions. They were very different from each other, but in each I felt honoured to be allowed to be present at these very personal occasions for the celebration of a life and the expression of grief at its ending. All of the services were, of course, Christian services and so the hope of salvation – freedom from the fear of death and damnation – was very apparent in all of them.

And we too, in our own faith, our life of prayer and relationship with God, will be aware of this promise of our own salvation.

It's a complex thing, our relationship with God. How indeed could we even think we *can* relate to a being who we believe created the whole universe? And He created not just the universe (as initiated in the Big Bang, about 13 billion years ago, and continuing until it eventually dissipates and dies, or crunches up again). God was also there before the big bang, and created anything that preceded it, and will be there after its end. As has been said, very cogently, "If we think we can understand God, it cannot be God that we actually understand".

But that does not relieve us from the need to try to understand what we can, within our limitations. We must love God, and love must surely include a real attempt at understanding. And God has Himself provided the means of such understanding in the ways that He has revealed Himself to us. His revelation to us comes in a number of ways, including:

- In the glory of the His creation – the natural world which is a visible manifestation of the work of God the Father and creator;

- In Holy Writ, that is, in the Bible as it has been handed down to us – especially the New Testament, which records the words, deeds and followed through teachings of God the Son; and
- In God's inspiration, that is the presence of the Holy Spirit within us and the world, now and to the end of time.

This is Trinity Sunday. The specific day of the year that we set aside for the praise and understanding of God, as Father, Son and Holy Spirit – Creator, Redeemer and Sustainer.

Although the word 'Trinity' does not appear anywhere in the Bible, the scriptures are infused with the differing aspects of God. Our two readings today each refer to all three of them. St Paul notes that we have peace with God the Father through our Lord Jesus Christ, and that God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit. And when Jesus says that all that the Father has is mine, it implies that He and the Father are essentially the same – and further that the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Truth, will take that same essence and thus form the Trinity of Godliness.

But it is still a difficult thing to get ones head around. During the years of the enlightenment, the apparent illogicality of the idea of the Trinity lead to a de-emphasis of its importance in Christian theology, but during the last century or so, that trend has been reversed. The Trinity's importance in extending our understanding of the nature of God, and the way we must relate to him, has led to the re-emergence of Trinitarian theological study. Because God is triune, we must respond to His call in a ways which correspond to the richness of His Nature. So today we have a Trinitarian theology of mission, a Trinitarian theology of worship and indeed a number of other Trinitarian approaches to other aspects of theology.

A story is told about St Augustine of Hippo, the great fourth century theologian, who wrote a massive treatise on the Trinity. While he was walking by the sea one day, he saw a small boy who had dug a hole in the sand and was fetching water in his hands to pour into the hole. When St Augustine asked what he was doing, he answered that he was emptying the sea into his hole. Augustine was dismissive – how could such a vast body of water be contained in such a small hole? The small boy was equally dismissive. How could Augustine expect to contain the vast mystery of God within the pages of a single book? Nevertheless, the endeavours of both rightly continued. The small boy exercised his physical stamina while learning something of the nature of the ocean, and Augustine exercised his mental capacity while learning something of the nature of God.

May we do the same, ordering our lives and our minds to embrace the wonderful fullness and complexity of our God. Not put off by the frailty of our human nature

and understanding, but working with the assistance of our triune God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Amen