

Revd Michael Burns  
Christ Church West Wimbledon  
Sermon :  
May 27, 2018 ~ “Trinity Sunday”

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“Have you ever conducted the wedding or funeral of anyone famous?” So asked a youngster at school recently in one of those ‘Ask the Vicar anything you want’ sessions. I had to admit that, in 40 years of ministry, I hadn’t. I’ve never conducted the marriage or funeral of anyone famous. I may have come across people who thought they were important, but who were nonetheless really very ordinary. Yes, well known in their locality maybe, but not in the wider world. In other words, my ministry has really been quite ordinary. Yet I wouldn’t have it any other way – for in my book, everyone is important – certainly important to God. Someone said ‘God loves ordinary people – it’s why he made so many of them’.

In a mad world where celebrities constantly hit the headlines, it remains true that many more ordinary people exist. Yet even ordinary people can live full, rich lives.

For into our ordinary lives come festivals – things we celebrate – birthdays, anniversaries and so on. The other week it was good to celebrate the Royal Wedding – but remembering too countless other more ordinary but nevertheless significant weddings. Church has many red letter days too which alleviate the ordinariness of our lives – like Trinity Sunday, when we celebrate the mystery of God – but then we move onto quite ordinary days when we are committed to just carrying on our work as faithfully as we can.

The festival of Trinity allows us time in the Church’s year to contemplate the nature of God, and marvel at it. One thing we slowly discover we shall never be able to do, as humans, is to grasp it with full understanding, simply because God is not made in our likeness, but we in his. Often people shrug off the possibility of God because he does not behave according to the limitations of humankind, and they feel he ought to if he is real.

But for many of us, at different times in our lives, we can suddenly and without warning glimpse a sight of God’s love for us – and that experience can overwhelm us and move us to silent wonder and adoration. There are times when people suddenly have a strong sense of God and it does often happen when we least expect it.

What the festival of Trinity tells us is that there is more to this life than the seen. As Jesus was helping Nicodemus to understand, even in the seen world there are invisible things like wind. How much more there is when we are in the realm of the Spirit. If we are

open to the possibility of it being so, we shall start to notice it. It's actually the Spirit 'in line' with our spirit which makes the necessary connections.

One of the noble characteristics of many people is their loathing of being fobbed off with lies as the truth. The Spirit leads us into truth, and God is Truth. Someone described the Trinity as a sort of perpetual circle - The Son leads us to the Father and the Spirit; the Father leads us to listen to the Son and the Spirit; and the Spirit leads us to the Son and the Father.

So people can usually spot a fake, a phoney, an untruth pretty quickly - and, conversely, people can spot someone who is real and genuine. Thus the Church - full of fallible human beings - tries its best to live out the truth of God's love by worship, witness and action. At the end of June, we will celebrate the Feast of St Peter - the disciple who denied he knew the Christ who was facing death - but who went on to be entrusted with the founding of the infant Church after the Resurrection and Ascension of the Risen Christ. God builds his Church on us all, fallible and weak though we may be.

One way in which God has worked over past years is through an organisation called Tearfund and it is their 50th anniversary this month. If you don't know Tearfund they are a local Christian overseas aid and development charity based in Teddington whose goal is to end extreme poverty. They usually work through local ordinary church communities in their development projects and are currently working in fifty countries. In their words, 'Following Jesus where the need is greatest.' The Archbishop of Canterbury has written a prayer to mark the anniversary and Tearfund are asking for as many Christians as possible all around the world to say the prayer on today - and we'll be doing this during our prayers. Just one small way that we can identify with our fellow Christians around the world.

So today, Trinity Sunday, we continue as faithfully as we possibly can in that long line of ordinary faithful Christians since AD 33 - 1,985 years ago. Each of us has God-given gifts and talents, which we can choose to use in God's service - or equally can choose to hide from God - or at least hide from the Vicar! Of course, many of you do use your gifts and talents to the full in all sorts of way for one of the distinctive characteristics of this Church is that way in which we try to use the giftings which people have been given, so that this Church is as much an all-member Church as it is possible to be. So today we give real thanks for what we are all able to do as individual Christians - which when put together makes for a vibrant and lively Christian family by which Christ Church can witness to the wider West Wimbledon community.