

“CALL & DESTINY”

Trinity Sunday

Isaiah 6:8

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Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, “Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?” And I said, “Here am I; send me!”

Today is Trinity Sunday. I used to think it prudent to invite the Bishop to make his official visitation to Trinity Church on Trinity Sunday, so I didn't have to preach. The Doctrine of the Holy Trinity, I reasoned, is above my pay grade. Let him deal with it. But I've mellowed in my old age, and will give the Trinity a go this morning.

God is a complicated figure, a difficult concept. The Trinity was defined for us all at the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215, the same year King John was autographing the Magna Carta. The Council said this about the Trinity: “it is the Father who generates, the Son who is begotten, and the Holy Spirit who proceeds.” Got that? Quoting any more from the Council would send you screaming from the building.

New Testament scholar and Bible translator J.B. Phillips, wrote a book called *Your God is Too Small*, arguing that any concept of God we have is insufficient. The Trinity is a way to make our view of God larger, and believe it or not, easier to understand.

Back in the 1950's, television's early years, what were essentially stage plays were telecast. The camera was positioned where the theater audience would be, and the actors would play to the camera in place of a live audience, the so-called “fourth wall” of the stage. Someone—I used to know who it was—looked at the situation and tried putting cameras on all sides of the actors and moving them around. The cameras caught every angle, all 360 degrees, sometimes so close we could read the actor's lips, sometimes far enough back to show several actors and their interactions. It made everything more real, more lifelike. This may be one reason why I mostly prefer movies to stage plays—especially since I am appropriately in the cheap seats, and often have a limited view of the live action.

Believe it or not, this is an explanation of the Doctrine of the Holy Trinity. The Trinity looks at God from a number of angles, at least three views. To paraphrase J.B. Phillips, even the Three Persons of the Trinity may be too small, too restrictive. Three is of course one of the magic biblical numbers, like twelve or forty, so it's considered a holy number. One attempt at a non-sexist, politically correct blessing uses "Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier" in place of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

As I write this on Thursday, it is not difficult to give thanks to the **Creator**. The weather is beautiful, the flowers are in bloom, bridge players are laughing on the porch. We live in one of the most beautiful parts of a beautiful country, enjoying freedom—if only to grouse about how bad things have gotten. A purely scientific explanation of Creation seems to me anemic and inadequate. How did every detail get so right so much of the time? Maybe God?

It's on to the **Redeemer**, Jesus, the Second Person of the Trinity. How many of you watched Bishop Curry preach at the Royal Wedding? He told us that Jesus' principal message is Love. I hope we can hold on to that. He made a very good case. It is probably a good time to invite your friends and neighbors to come with you to **The Episcopal Church**. I don't think the secularists could call him or his message evil or irrelevant. My theory is that most of the distaste for church is because of the louder fundamentalists, who speak the name Jesus, and then quote mostly from the Old Testament. Jesus lived and loved and performed miracles and suffered and rose again. His is a simple but wonderful life we celebrate.

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The **Sanctifier**, the Holy Spirit, flows throughout history, including today. It is the Holy Spirit who speaks to us, sometimes in words, often not. It is the Holy Spirit who calls us—to quote the US Army—to be all that we can be. In the case of Isaiah, the call came to him in a vision. He heard the voice of the Lord. He responded. The rest is history. In another place, the call comes to Elijah in a still, small voice. To many, maybe to most of us, the call comes gradually, persistently, over time.

One of my favorite stories is from the biography of George Patton. From

the earliest age, Patton wanted to be a soldier, a leader of men, doing everything he could to move himself in that direction. He had a cousin, Robbie Patton, who seemed normal enough. Robbie enrolled at UVA, quickly became a good-time Charlie, a normal frat boy. Then suddenly, without warning, Robbie Patton received **The Call**, enrolled in the Virginia Theological Seminary, and began a distinguished career as an Episcopal priest in the Diocese of Virginia. I believe he's buried at UVA.

George Patton was a devout man, reading the Bible as he later told reporters "every goddamn night," and he knew one could not evade The Call. After Robbie's experience, George got on his knees every bedtime, and prayed that he not receive The Call. He didn't get that particular Call, but it is clear he was called to be a great soldier and general.

What is each of us called to do, in big and little ways? What is our destiny? What does the Holy Spirit say to you, sometimes in words, often not? What steps do you need to take to be all that you can be? What keeps coming to you, gradually and persistently, over time?

We experience God in at least three ways, through the wonders of Creation, through the life of Jesus as we know it from the Holy Bible, and through the actions and prodding of the Holy Spirit each and every day.

On Trinity Sunday, do remember the Trinity: "it is the Father who generates, the Son who is begotten, and the Holy Spirit who proceeds." What more do you need to know?

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