**#47 Trinity Sunday, AS, 12 June 2022**

Romans 5: 1-5

### Peace and Hope

**5**Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Romans%205:1-5&version=NIV#fen-NIV-28049a)] have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, **2**through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we[[b](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Romans%205:1-5&version=NIV#fen-NIV-28050b)] boast in the hope of the glory of God. **3**Not only so, but we[[c](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Romans%205:1-5&version=NIV#fen-NIV-28051c)] also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; **4**perseverance, character; and character, hope. **5**And hope does not put us to shame, because God’s love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us.

John 16:12-15

**12**“I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear. **13**But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all the truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. **14**He will glorify me because it is from me that he will receive what he will make known to you. **15**All that belongs to the Father is mine. That is why I said the Spirit will receive from me what he will make known to you.”

I was witness, at a staff meeting shortly before David went to New Zealand, to the Zoomed sight and sound of my clergy colleagues giggling and chortling to each other in a manner that some might say was unbecoming. I suspect I heard a snort in there too. The occasion for this was in The Rector of Bromsgrove, having looked through the sermon rota, revealing that he’d put me down to preach on Trinity Sunday.

I’m sure you can image the conversation – ‘it’ll be good for you’ they said…’it’s a great chance…’ they said; benevolent care, in other words, even if it felt like just the latest round of the popular panel game, ‘Get the Curate.’

But friends, it truly IS a privilege, as it is to speak on any day when we gather, and it’s a wonderful subject to wrestle. So, let’s get oiled up and see where we go. Because The Trinity is something that as Christians, we know we should believe in but we’re not sure why or how.

In my wrestling, I thought it best to invoke a big mind to help me get any sort of grip. So I sought wisdom from someone who, although probably an atheist, had a particular, forensic way of thinking about things. I refer to the Consulting Detective, Mr Sherlock Holmes, of 221b Baker Street, London, NW1.

Two sayings of Holmes’s have resonated with me in thinking about the Trinity.

1 In the short story, Silver Blaze, there is an exchange between Mr Holmes and Inspector Gregory, of Scotland Yard.

Gregory: Is there any other point to which you would wish to draw my attention?  
Holmes: To the curious incident of the dog in the night-time.  
Gregory: The dog did nothing in the night-time.  
Holmes: That was the curious incident.

So it’s a feeling of an absence that Holmes concentrates on. Curious! How often do we think God is doing nothing when in fact, he’s doing everything?

2 In the novel, The Sign of the Four, - which is one too many on Trinity Sunday, but go with me - Holmes’s literal methods are shown. He says, slightly petulantly, I think, to his colleague and associate, Dr Watson,

‘” You *will not* apply my methods," he said, shaking his head. "How often have I said to you that Once you eliminate the impossible, whatever remains, no matter how improbable, must be the truth”.

So, back to the Trinity. What is it that we eliminate to get to the point where we welcome the Trinity as the truth – as the way that we express the love of Father, Son and the Holy Spirit?

Well, we eliminate the possibility that someone is lying. In our Gospel reading today, towards the end of what’s called The Long Farewell, Jesus says, ‘when the Spirit of Truth comes, he will guide you in all the truth…All that the father has is mine’. Its scripture like this, where the Trinity is taken for granted, as it is in Romans reading, that led to the Council of Nicea in 325 listening to arguments and then prayerfully and honestly seeing God as a holy trinity. In deciding this, they imposed heresies on some people, and orthodoxies on others, and I’m not convinced that it always helped our overall history in Christ, but I don’t think anyone was lying, or making it up; it was – and is, a deeply held belief.

And then, as Holmes suggests, we eliminate the possibility that someone is plain old wrong. How do we do this? Well, one way is to use what’s called, in egg-headed academic theological circles, *the criterion of embarrassment*. All this is, is a method where you say, for instance, that the early church would hardly have gone out of its way to believe an idea, like the Trinity, that embarrassed God or made Him sound ridiculous in conversations with people. Some of the things we believe, for instance the resurrection, the virgin birth, my favourite the ascension, these really are curious incidents - you just wouldn’t make them up. The same with the Trinity – would you really *make up* a system of how God moves in our world that was so difficult to explain and understand…unless you believed in it? Why put yourself through 2000 years, and counting, of explaining it unless it *was* true for you? We could go on, we’ve just had Pentecost, how weird is that?

And yet…

And yet, we believe. This is the faith of the church. This is our faith.

Mostly, though, we eliminate the possibility that our dear God would deceive us in giving us this way of thinking about his work in the world. The Trinity, as Jesus says, is God given; the bringing together of God and Jesus is made universal by the spirit; all can know and share togetherness with God, through Jesus in the life of the Spirit.

David said last week at Compline that faith is really simple; and he’s right. Another authority that I rely on, Wittgenstein, said we should make ideas ‘as simple as possible, but no simpler than that.’ How do we make the Trinity simple enough to be real, but keep it rich enough to honour Christ, and to make it bustle throughout our lives – so that it’s *not* forever something we know we should believe in but we’re not sure why.

Rather than going with Mr Homes’s hard logic to give a black or white, yes or no, answer, I think we look to try to express the live-giving richness of the Trinity of a simple idea. Jesus, after all, taught us to be contemplative rather than speculative.

Where I am now in thinking about the Trinity is held together in these words –

# “And in this he showed me a little thing, the quantity of a hazel nut, lying in the palm of my hand…I looked upon it with the eye of my understanding, and thought, ‘What may this be?’ And it was answered generally thus, ‘It is all that is made.’

# And in this little thing I saw three properties. The first is that God made it. The second that God loves it. And the third, that God keeps it.”

# God made it, God loves it, and God keeps it.

# *Need* we say any more?

# Amen