

Lucia Lloyd's sermon
June 19, 2011
Matthew 28:16-20

Trinity Sunday, Year A

A Buddhist walks into a pizza shop and says, "Can you make me one with everything?"

It's the enlightened ones who got that joke.

I have no idea what would happen if an Episcopalian walked into a pizza shop; every time I hear about Episcopalians, they're walking into a bar.

It did remind me of Jesus' prayer in John 17: "Holy Father, protect them in your name that you have given me, so that they may be one, as we are one." (John 17:11) And then Jesus adds more to his prayer: "I ask not only on behalf of these, but also on behalf of those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. The glory that you have given me I have given them, so that they may be one, as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may become completely one, so that the world may know that you have sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me." (John 17:20-24) Today as we celebrate Trinity Sunday, it is appropriate to focus on the sense of oneness that is so important to Jesus.

From a human perspective, we experience the three persons of the Trinity as separate and different. I do believe that God is at work in me, despite all my weaknesses and sins, and I talk about that as the Holy Spirit. And I believe that I'm not Jesus (Lord help you if you've got a clergyman who thinks they're Jesus) because God works in the life of Jesus on a whole different level than the way God works in my life. And I believe that I'm not God, because the way the Almighty Creator of the universe works is very different from the way I work. So from my human perspective, the three persons of the Trinity seem separate and different.

But when Jesus talks about this sort of thing, he prays to God, "As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us." He prays "that they may be one, as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may become completely one." It is as if Jesus took the request of the guy in the pizza shop and prayed the reverse: "Can you

make them one with each other, as I am one with you, I in them and you in me.” From Jesus’ perspective, the separation between the three persons of the Trinity disappears, because they are one already. It’s as if Jesus is saying, “It’s all good.”

Today’s gospel reading from Matthew contains Jesus’ instructions to baptize “in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.” The three persons of the Trinity are specifically named here as a central part of baptism, in the final words of the Risen Christ to his disciples after his resurrection. Today’s passage is the very last verses of Matthew’s gospel, so this naming of the three persons of the Trinity figures prominently in the culmination of the entire gospel.

Paul’s second letter to the Corinthians, which most scholars have dated as being written about 55 AD, also names the three persons of the Trinity in the last verse of that epistle: “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit, be with all of you.”

My daughter Mary got glow-in-the-dark chalk as a birthday present, and the kids at her birthday slumber party had gone outside and used the sparkly chalk to draw a picture of the sun, and they’d drawn each planet in the solar system with a circle to show its orbit. When Kendall showed it to me, I immediately said, “the planets in their courses...” and Kendall immediately replied, “and this fragile earth, our island home...” One advantage that Episcopal children get is hearing the liturgy repeated so often that you learn it by heart. Since I grew up in a Presbyterian Church in which the liturgy was different from week to week, I missed most of that. But I still remember little bits of the service that were repeated often when I was a child, and I can still remember the voice of our minister, John Galloway. One of them was this verse from 2 Corinthians, which he often used as a benediction at the end of the service: “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit, be with all of you.” So when I began my ministry, I figured I’d just follow his good example. It turned out to be harder than I expected, because I kept mixing up which attribute went with which person of the Trinity in which order. I would start out by confidently proclaiming, “The love of Christ...” and then think, wait a minute, that’s not right, it’s not the love of Christ, what is it? The love of Christ is wrong. Doesn’t God come first? Is it the grace of God? No, no, it’s not the grace of God, the grace of God must be wrong. There’s nothing like

standing up in front of a church and getting everybody's blessing all mixed up. And of course the more embarrassed I got, the more jumbled the blessing became. So it didn't take long before I resorted to saying "the blessing of God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit be upon you now and always" and breathing a sigh of relief when we got to the Amen.

Looking back at it now, though, I think God must have been laughing. Laughing with me, not at me, of course. Because really, is it wrong to talk about the love of Christ? Is it wrong to talk about the grace of God? It's all good. It's all one to God. Love certainly comes from all three of them. Grace certainly comes from all three of them. Communion certainly comes from all three of them. That's what communion is: oneness.

An Episcopalian walks into a church and says, "Can you make me one with everything?" And God says, "Sure. The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit, be with all of you." Amen.