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Trinity Sunday B: Isaiah 6:1-8, Psalm 29, Romans 8:12-17, John 3:1-17

Love as the Trinity dances

In the name of the Creator, the Redeemer and the Sanctifier. Amen

I have done many different things in my life and one of them was working as a relationship educator. One of the exercises I used to get the couples to do was to dance, to move around a prescribed area, as they wanted to. There was no music or set steps just an opportunity to work together, watch and pay attention to each other. What this exercise revealed was a whole lot of stuff – how they did or didn't communicate, who liked to be in control, how comfortable they were with closeness, how much distance they needed and when, how much unresolved stuff they were lugging around. I remember one couple where the woman spent her whole time moving away from the man. He could never get anywhere near her! Or another couple where the bloke stood bolt upright and did not move at all. His partner was like a butterfly that kept coming back to him and leaving again. It was all very revealing!

The doctrine of the Trinity is meant to reveal to us something about the nature of God. The early Christian writers came up with the idea of the Trinity to describe the God they had experienced - a loving Creator, a living Son and an empowering Holy Spirit. It is the same experience we can have and countless Christians have had down the ages. It is a living truth we attempt to understand. This celebration of the Trinity gives us an opportunity to think about the nature of God even though all our efforts will only be pale approximations of the mystery that is God.

So with that caveat - what is God like? Who is this God we question and doubt, struggle with and worship? If we look at the doctrine of the Trinity we see that it is not so much about WHAT God is but rather HOW God is: And what the doctrine reveals is that God is in constant relationship.

The heart of the doctrine of the Trinity is the idea that God is most fully understood as a relationship of love. The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are joined in a relationship of unity and love that ultimately spills out into the creation. All three of today's readings help us see this idea being worked out.

In the reading from Isaiah, God seeks out someone to speak with God's people precisely because God desires to communicate with, and thereby be in relationship with, God's people. In Romans Paul emphasizes the way in which the Spirit of God empowers us to seize hold of our spiritual birthright as children of God because of

our baptism into, and union with, Christ's death and resurrection. We are drawn into relationship with the living God of the Trinity. Through Jesus Christ we look on God as father and claim Christ as our brother. In the gospel reading, Jesus attempts to draw Nicodemus into the mystery of God by pointing to God's ultimate act of love – that God so loved the world that he gave his only son.

Jurgen Moltmann, a German theologian, describes the Trinity as the “eternal sacrifice of love”. The Trinitarian God is the lover, the beloved and love itself who is open to the world because it is the very nature of love to give. Perhaps I am an incurable romantic or maybe it is simply because I have such a powerful experience of being redeemed by Gods love but I find this picture of God wonderfully compelling and beautiful. It is picture that allows us to see that all of creation is part of this relational loving God that reaches out to gather up the whole creation in his tender embrace.

At this years folk festival David and I learnt how to dance the tango. It was great fun – and very revealing – a bit, just a bit, like those poor couples I worked with so long ago! The Tango is called the dance of love for good reason. The two partners in Tango must be completely present to each other and aware of each other. There is always one leader in a Tango dance. The other must religiously and carefully follow but the leader must be gentle and communicate clearly where they are going. The two dancers must maintain their connection at all times – it is a dance of gentle intimacy and communication. It takes a high degree of mindfulness. Between the two people there is an energy that connects. Good tango dancers can feel the energy between them. As they dance the dancers create a thing of beauty, they create delight, they communicate love and I don't know about you but I see Tango dancers and I just want to get up and join them.

Well I think God as the Trinity is a bit like a Tango dance. The leader is God the ultimate creator who leads the dance of life, who gently loves and guides. Christ is the partner in creation who follows the creator, who listens intently to where the creators will is leading, who is always focussed on the father. The Holy Spirit is the energy between them, the communication that unites them. This dance of the Trinity reaches out to us, drawing us in, inviting us to dwell in the circle of love.

It is the lover, the beloved and love itself calling us to love ourselves, others and the whole of creation, to be part of the gathering up of all things into Gods being.

It all sounds very beautiful doesn't it – or maybe I am just getting carried away with my own picture! But what does this mean for us as we go about our daily lives? How does it help us live with the reality of human existence – all its brokenness and suffering? Well I think the first thing to remember is that this love expressed and created by God is unconditional. It is a love that is offered to all. All of creation is invited into the dance. Nothing and no-one is beyond the love of God. All people whatever their age, race, colour, creed, sexual orientation, state of well being, disability or gender are all equally invited into the dance of love. All people are equally welcomed, honoured and loved by God. As followers of the Triune God we can do no less. We are called to mirror this graciousness not only to others but to ourselves. Such an idea should at least give us pause to think about how we treat refugees, how we deal with difference, how we welcome others.

The next thing to remember is that for relationships to work, any relationships, takes listening. Tango dancers don't just listen to each other with their ears. They listen with their whole body. Jesus was perfectly attuned to the Father. The Holy Spirit is perfectly attuned to both. Listening is the first and most critical thing we can do in all our relationships – with God, with our children, with our partners, with the person beside you in the pew, with our work colleagues – listening opens up the space for truth to be discovered, someone to be affirmed, love to be known.

And finally the concept of the Trinity can help us with our understanding of the natural world and our place in it. On Thursday I ran up Mount Rogers near Spence. It was about 5.00 in the evening and the setting sun was beginning to cast its shadow.

When I got to the top there was the most magnificent 360 degree view of Canberra and the surrounding hills. I soaked in the gloriousness of it all. Up there it hit me that God was part of all that beauty, we are part of all that beauty, all connected, a part of God who is everywhere, not just because humans are part of creation but because we are caught up in the reality that is God. By virtue of our adoption as heirs with Christ we are in the Trinitarian circle of love.

Paul in Romans tells us that all of creation waits in eager longing for the revealing of the children of God. Why would creation wait eagerly I wonder? Well I reckon creation needs human beings who love and honour creation in the same way as God the father does. Such a notion is even more compelling in our time and place. With environmental damage at a rate never before seen in human history humans must rediscover their fundamental connection to the earth and God the creator. We need to tap into the power to create with love,

not destroy with greed.

Shortly we will share communion with each other. The Eucharist is the sacrament that truly reflects the Trinity. In coming together around the table we focus and listen to God as his love is revealed. We unite ourselves to each other and God through the sharing of bread and wine. We are all welcome. In the physical elements of bread and wine we see the fruits of the earth and we are united with creation. We are all caught up into the love of God and strengthened to live our lives more truly and fully. May our sharing in the dance of love be holy and may we find our true home with and through and in the Triune God. Amen