

SERMON FOR TRINITY SUNDAY – JUNE 3, 2020**PSALM 8 “PARTICIPATING IN THE UNITY OF THE TRIUNE GOD”**

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen. Diversity and unity. Diversity, but not division or separation. Distinction, and still harmony. These words might conjure up many images in our minds. They are words especially pregnant with meaning to ears which have listened for almost two weeks now to various descriptions of the egregious, despicable actions done to Mr. George Floyd before he died, a man created by Almighty God, on whom God placed his own image. Can we have diversity and unity at the same time? Does the gospel of Jesus Christ have anything to say to our world where it is, at this present moment? We have all been flooded with news coverage in recent weeks and months, and it has shown a country divided and in flames—and sadly this is not just figurative. With these images in our minds, it is hard to imagine what unity might possibly look like, let alone perfect unity, everlasting unity, unity that knows no limits.

Today, on Trinity Sunday, the church finds herself lifting her eyes to gaze at the perfect, eternal, uncreated God who exists as One God in Three Persons. The Father, Son, and Spirit are distinct one from another, and yet perfectly One. As one of our ecumenical creeds teaches, we worship One God in Trinity and the Trinity in unity, neither confusing (or blending) the distinct Persons, nor dividing their one divine Being. And if God is the only perfect depiction of diversity and unity put together, but his life had nothing to do with the world he created, well then we would have no hope of rescue. But as we hear in our psalm, God is intimately involved in the work of his hands. He alone is the fountain of true, lasting unity, and he is the only hope we have as we seek healing for our pervasive divisions, both as citizens of heaven and citizens on earth.

Let us turn our minds and imaginations to Psalm 8 which we have just prayed together. This psalm composed by King David is a hymn of praise which begins with these words: “O LORD, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth.” From this first verse alone we hear words that reveal God’s will to unify the human creatures he made. “Oh LORD, our Lord.” David does not intend for this song to be sung in solitary confinement, or by a single priest from the tribe of Levi. David boldly addresses the God of all the universe, whose name is exalted in all the earth, as our Lord. The song assumes a people lifting their voices in unison, joining together to worship the Lord.

Now we should notice something else that’s really curious about this initial phrase, “Oh LORD our Lord”: the first word LORD is always put in all capital letters in our English Bibles. This lets us know the Hebrew word is the name of God that is above all other names, that never gets used to designate any other except the eternal God who revealed himself to Israel as I AM. But the second Lord, the one that just capitalizes the L, is actually used many times throughout Scripture more generally, as a way to refer to those who are rulers or kings, or sometimes even to heads of households like Abraham in Genesis 18. Any of you who might enjoy watching period pieces on Netflix can remember many English men who were called lords, though they didn’t always live up to the title.

So why would David make use of two different words for God, one referring only to the Divine Majesty, and one that gets used to address even human rulers? David is composing a song that prophesies an earthly Ruler, an earthly Lord. But this earthly ruler and Lord will also be able to lay claim to the unique name which only belongs to God the LORD, in all capital letters. This psalm directs Israel to the coming King of Israel Jesus Christ, true God and true man, not two Lords, but one Lord. The Son of God who was with God and who was God in the beginning before the foundation of the world, is the One who would later take on human flesh and live among us. It is this Lord whose glory is above the heavens, who has always been perfectly united with his Father by their love which is the Holy Spirit. So we hear these unifying words “our Lord,” and then we hear that this Lord’s majestic name is over all the earth. He does not privatize his name or reserve it to be revealed to a select few people who are worthy.

Even though the LORD did choose to specially reveal himself to the people of Israel, he always intended for Israel to make his name known in all nations. He willed that his majestic name would be over all peoples of the earth: Jew and Gentile, male and female, rich and poor, young and old. We hear echoes of the psalm from our reading in Matthew: Go into all the world and preach the gospel. Baptize people from every nation in my majestic name that is in all the earth, in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. David continues, “From the lips of children and infants you have ordained praise because of your enemies, to silence the foe and the avenger.” Even from the lips of infants who cannot yet speak, God has chosen to establish his power and has ordained his praise. Children and infants are obviously weak and powerless when compared to Israel’s great enemies. Yet somehow, they silence the Lord’s enemies and reveal his mighty power.

Think with me for a moment about the strangeness of this. Babies as we know are entirely dependent upon another for life and sustenance. They can maybe utter a little coo or a cry, but could they possibly proclaim the power or greatness of the LORD and declare his praise? According to David, that’s actually what infants and children do, simply by virtue of the fact that God made them. Perhaps especially because of their powerlessness and weakness, little ones sing God’s praises and confound the wise and powerful. And there is one baby who would be miraculously conceived and born to a simple peasant girl named Mary. He would grow as a child and continue to perfectly declare the praises of God as the second Person of the Holy Trinity in human form, and so crush God’s enemies under his frail and tiny feet.

Perhaps you are beginning to hear the movement of this psalm. David brings Israel, and now us too, from the heights of the heavens to the smallest of human creatures because he is making known to us the One who came down from the heights of heaven to live as a son of man. In so doing Jesus reveals a unity grander than our wildest imagining—a unity which actually brings together heaven and earth, the Creator with his creation. “When I look at the heavens, the work of your fingers—the moon and the stars which you have set in place, what is man, that you are mindful of him, and the son of man that you care for him?” 3 What is man? What is woman? Why would God choose to think of us, remember us, to seek us out and care for us? Why does God count us so much more precious than the most radiant galaxies in the heavens? Why did God choose to create us at all? God obviously had no lack in himself, no need for more glory or power, no need for greater unity or a more complete love.

The Father, Son, and Spirit have always existed as a circle of perfect love in perfect harmony. So, we’d have to answer, no God did not have to create us at all. Because he did not have to, that means that he freely chose to create us. And he chose to create us, because he desired to love us. He desired to share his love with the whole world, and especially to include human beings in his own perfect love, in the divine love of the Father, the Son, and the Spirit who live in perfect distinction and unity.

What is man, that God is mindful of us? And, we might add to David’s question, what is man, that God would choose to send his Son to live as one of us? Jesus Christ is the One our psalm called for, who would be made a little lower than the heavenly beings. He condescended to be a son of man with us, giving up his glory and sacrificing his life on the cross, so that he could bring us to God. The Son came down from heaven because the Triune God did not want humankind to be left to itself, left to its sin and division and destruction. In Genesis 11 at the tower of Babel, when humanity was trying to make a name for itself, division and separation ensued. This was not the way it was supposed to be. And God chose to send his Son to that exact world and heal it.

At Pentecost last week, we saw what could happen when people—who were still very much reaping the consequences of Babel—were given a new name. You remember the scene. The people gathered were all speaking in different languages and telling of the mighty works of God. The Jews and Gentiles who for years despised each other were given a new name that joined them together, the name of Jesus Christ. God is still working in this way today. He does not want us to be left making a name for ourselves, he knows that’ll only lead to our destruction. He desires to come to us, and in baptism, he gives us his own name that is above every name. This is the only name which joins people from every nation and race together rather than dividing and separating them. As Paul says in Philippians 2, it is at the name of Jesus that every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord. Every single one of us.

If we are looking for any hope in the face of our current divisions, we must begin, each one of us, by returning to our baptisms, by bending our knee to the Lord of heaven and earth who alone is—and evermore will be—the only source of lasting unity. The second Person of the Holy Trinity still lives right now in our human flesh. As “ruler of the works of [God’s] hands” and with “all things placed under his feet,” our Lord willed that his magnificent, beautiful creation would not exist without you and me in it, and that it would not exist without every person we encounter in it. He is not in any way distant or cold or aloof from what is happening to his creation. He didn’t create and let us fend for ourselves. The work of God’s fingers is ongoing as he remains intimately involved and tenderly mindful of each one of us. Why? Because he loves every creature he has made with unfathomable love, a unifying love that we actually get to participate in and demonstrate to each other. This love that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit share with us will truly upend and change the whole world. The change might come in the form of listening attentively to someone very different from ourselves or offering to help a neighbor with an unwelcome task. It might come in the form of taking a walk and praying for our neighborhoods.

There are as many ways that this love will take shape as there are people in God’s creation. But all of this must begin with recognizing the humanity of one another. The love of God working in us begins with showing that persons we encounter are men and women and children who are made in the image of God, which means that they too are made for the infinite and perfect and unifying love that God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit created humankind to receive.

So on this Trinity Sunday, may we come to praise God with one voice. Let us yearn to join the psalmist’s song, “Oh Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth.” May we together praise God for giving us a share in his name, his authority, and his own Spirit in baptism so that we too can share the love of the Triune God with others. May our praise together today spill out into our homes, our neighborhoods and into our hurting world which is marked by distrust and disunity. And may the God of all hope fill us with the unbreakable assurance that the unity shared in heaven can truly be shared on earth, because Jesus Christ lives, to the glory of his Father in the unity of the Holy Spirit. Amen.