

The Church is Called to Exhibit a Dynamic Interplay of Loving Relationships, As a Reflection of the Trinity

"Just as the Godhead is a dynamic interplay of loving relationships," the Rev. Dr. Brook Thelander said in his Trinity Sunday sermon, "the church is to be a dynamic interplay of loving relationships" and "to reflect the reality of the Triune Godhead in its relationships. Those relationships are to be characterized by mutuality, by reciprocity, by peace. As in a dance, there is to be a moving around, a making room for each partner without destroying the differences."

"The word 'Trinity' itself is not found in Scripture," Pastor Thelander said, "but the Bible does reveal to us One God in three Persons of Father, Son and Holy Spirit." Trinity Sunday, he continued, "was introduced into the liturgical cycle as a celebration of this teaching," which began to appear explicitly in Christian exposition as early as with Irenaeus in 190 A.D.

"Part of what makes the doctrine of the Trinity so complex is that it is essentially a revealed truth that transcends our finite human wisdom," he continued. "It is therefore hard to explain, because there are no adequate analogies in human experience or wisdom. Some have tried to explain it in terms of an egg, where you have the shell, the yolk and the white of the egg. Some have tried to explain it in terms of water, which can be boiled to produce steam or frozen to produce ice.

"Both of these may be well-intentioned, but they fall prey to a heresy known as 'modalism,' which essentially means that the three Persons of the Trinity are just different 'modes' or expressions of God."

"Perhaps the most helpful way to help us understand the Trinity may come to us from our brothers and sisters in the Eastern Orthodox tradition." Their word is "*perichoresis*," he said, which "comes from the words 'circle' and 'dance'. For the Orthodox, the Trinity is an eternal dance of Father, Son and Spirit, a mutual sharing of love, respect, honor, joy and happiness. . . .

"Paul concludes his letter to the Corinthians with the formula of the Trinity, but his blessing is more than just a nice liturgical way to end his letter. For what he is concluding is a series of exhortations which describe the ways Christians are to relate to each other in the church. He is giving the Corinthians 'dance lessons', as it were. . . . If you read Paul's words through (p.2→)

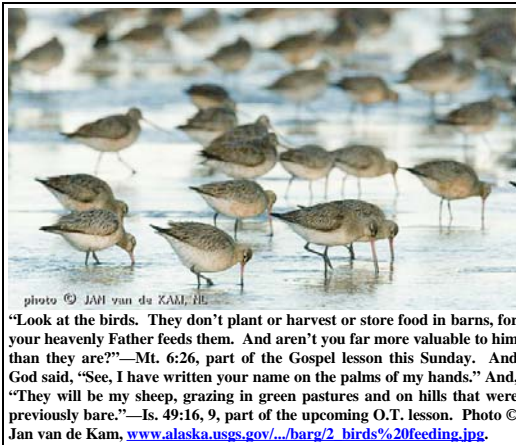


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"Look at the birds. They don't plant or harvest or store food in barns, for your heavenly Father feeds them. And aren't you far more valuable to him than they are?"—Mt. 6:26, part of the Gospel lesson this Sunday. And God said, "See, I have written your name on the palms of my hands." And, "They will be my sheep, grazing in green pastures and on hills that were previously bare."—Is. 49:16, 9, part of the upcoming O.T. lesson. Photo © Jan van de Kam, www.alaska.usgs.gov/.../barg/2_birds%20feeding.jpg.

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On the Web: www.epworthchapelonthegreen.org

Sundays, 10:00 a.m.: Word & Table service

Sundays, 11:30 a.m.: Refreshments, conversation

Sundays, 11:45 a.m.: Moderated post-service discussion

Thursdays, 7:00 p.m.: Evening Prayers

For the poor: Meat; fresh produce; canned fruits and vegetables; dairy products; peanut butter; cooking oil; pancake mix; syrup; spices; diapers; baby wipes; bathroom tissue; for personal care: soap, shampoo, conditioner, razors, shaving cream; new underwear (adults and children); cleaning supplies; bleach.

Readings, 5/25: Is. 49:8-18; Ps. 62:6-14; 1 Cor. 4:1-13; Mt. 6:24-34. **6/1:** Deut. 11:18-28; Ps. 31:1-5, 19-24; Rom. 3:21-28; Mt. 7:21-27.

Prayer Emphases: Panama; Presbyterian Church in America; Church of the Resurrection, Chicago, IL, and the Rev. Dr. George Koch; Northwest Nazarene University; parishioners on Lubkin Street.

(**Sermon, cont'd.**) these lenses, then, the Trinity becomes a very practical doctrine. The same is true of the Gospel lesson, where you will notice that baptizing persons in the Trinitarian formula of Father, Son and Spirit is closely linked to teaching persons to obey Jesus' commandments. So today we bow at the foot of a great mystery. We acknowledge our (limited understanding) . . . and at the same time we accept that truth as being divinely revealed and central to orthodox Christian faith and practice. As we make our way to the Lord's Table today, let us . . . resolve to know this God who comes to us as Father, Son and Spirit and to 'dance the dance' which he has assigned to us here' locally.