

“I am with you Always”

Text: Genesis 1:1-2:4a

2 Corinthians 13:11-13 (Series A, Trinity Sunday) Psalm 8

Matthew 28:16-20

O Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth! *You have set your glory above the heavens. When I consider your 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, the son of man that you care for him?*

What is it that drove the great explorers of this century to risk their lives to venture across rugged and inhospitable places? What made men like Columbus, David Livingstone, Charles Stuart, Ernest Shackleton, Alexander Mackenzie, Otto Sverdrup and many others leave what was safe and secure and set off into the unknown?

No doubt it was the idea that there was a large portion of this world that was a mystery and they were determined to solve this mystery by crisscrossing the globe at the risk of their own lives.

They wanted to answer questions like – is there a great sea in the centre of our land, what lies out there beyond what is known, is there good farming land with green pastures out there somewhere, perhaps there is gold or some other precious mineral waiting to be discovered?

You can say that it has always been the goal of people over the centuries to expand knowledge and find answers to everything that is unknown. But there are some mysteries that will always be a mystery.

The mystery of the Trinity is nothing if not confounding and controversial. One God/Three Persons ~ separate yet one, equal with different roles that are ultimately the same, belief in one is meant to be belief in all and the One that is the same but different. Got that? Today, Trinity Sunday, we come against one of those mysteries - God. I dare say that it's not very often that we think of God as a mystery. Who is God? Where is God? What is God?

- I can't touch him.
- I can't say how big he is because I don't know what to measure.
- I can't see him. If I wanted to take a photo of God I don't know where to point the camera.
- I can't knock on his door and have morning tea with God at his home.
- I can't feel the presence of God because I'm never too sure if I am only feeling my own emotions.
- I can't imagine what God is like because I always end up using human pictures, giving him human qualities so that he makes sense to my small human mind.
- I can't think like God because if I could I would be able to understand why a young mother had to die, why thousands of people die in earthquakes, why a baby is severely disabled.

We don't often talk about the mystery and awesomeness of God these days. We have tried to be a bit more logical about God and refer to him as a father, a friend, a wonder person.

We often think about God as a bigger and more powerful version of us. Some even view God as having emotions like us.

Others view God as a nameless being. As humans, creatures of God, we can't even begin to imagine what God is like. We are restricted to describing God with earthly terminology and so can only express what God is like in the vaguest of terms and left guessing what we have missed.

This is the mystery of God, the great God, the only God who is three persons in one God, who refuses to be categorized, who is far bigger and greater than we could ever imagine, who existed before this world was made, who doesn't need us to exist.

The early Christians started talking about a Triune God. This wasn't to make God more logical and understandable and acceptable to human ways of thinking. In fact, the idea of the Trinity intensified the mystery and awesomeness of God.

They observed that Jesus had a unique relationship with the Father and that the Holy Spirit had a unique relationship with the Father and the Son. Against all sorts of odds, against all human logic, and in the face of mounting opposition, the Church maintained that Jesus Christ is true God, equal with the Father, and that the Holy Spirit is God, equal with the Father and the Son.

David, the psalmist can see that God is truly majestic when he says, "*O Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth! You have set your glory above the heavens*" (Ps 8:1). He looks at the stars and the moon, and these days we could go further and add the galaxies and planets of the universe, and he can only conclude that these must be the work of a great God.

Maybe you have done the same. You looked at the magnificent colours of a sunset, the intricate structure of a beautiful flower, the mountains, the green paddocks, a star filled sky and you have said, "There, that's proof that there is a God. Anyone who wants to see evidence of God's existence doesn't need to look any further."

But seeing God in the universe can only be seen **with the eyes of faith**. Those who already know God can see that the wonders of nature are signs of God's greatness. The psalmist talks about the greatness of God as a matter of faith calling God '*our Lord*', "***O Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth!***"

The prophet Isaiah echoes the same mystery about the mystery of God when he says, "*Who knows the mind of God? To whom can the holy God be compared? The Lord is the everlasting God, he created all the world.... No-one understands his thoughts*" (Isaiah 40:25a, 28).

But we do know more about God. He is more than the God of nature. There is another side to God other than his greatness and awesomeness. He has revealed himself as a God who cares, a personal God who wants to have a relationship with his people. And so, we hear of the writer in Deuteronomy say with a great deal of surprise, "*Search the past, the time before you were born, all the way back to the time when God created human beings on the earth.*"

Search the entire earth. Has anything as great as this ever happened before? Has anyone ever heard of anything like this? ... Has any god ever dared to go and take a people from another nation and make them his own, as the Lord your God did for you in Egypt? ... He is a merciful God.

He will not abandon you or destroy you, and he will not forget the covenant that he himself made with your ancestors" (Deut 4:32,34,3). From the very first pages of the Bible we hear of a God who is powerful and great – he creates the earth with just a word – "**Let there be**" and it happened. We also hear about a God who wants to be close to his people – God and Adam and Eve were like best friends.

The psalmist marvels at the whole idea that this awesome and majestic God should care for someone so insignificant, so mortal as the human race. In fact, he loves the people whom he made so much that he even sent his own Son into the world to save them from the wickedness that had taken over the world.

A few weeks back we celebrated Good Friday and Easter; we celebrated the great love that God has for us by allowing his Son to die in our place and to conquer the power of death over us. He wants us all to come close to him, something that is only possible, because dealt with our sin. We have been reconciled to God as friends.

When we ask the question, "Who died on the cross?" we answer "God died on the cross!" He did the unthinkable – he allowed himself to fall into the hands of sinful people, be treated cruelly, laughed at, and then nailed to a cross. We say that in theory this is not possible. But he did. This is part of the mystery of God.

Last week we celebrated Pentecost – the pouring of the Holy Spirit on his disciples and the church. Jesus said that he and the Father would send the Spirit to remind us of the truth of God's promises, to guide us, to encourage us and sustain us when the going gets tough. There is nothing more personal than the Spirit of God.

- He knows us better than we know ourselves.

- He knows when we need reassuring.
- He knows when we are afraid and timid and need the encouragement that comes from God's Word.
- He knows when we are guilty and depressed and need comforting.

He becomes a part of our *sordid* existence in this world. He lives in us even though we allow our sinful nature to take control of our lives so often. Theoretically this is impossible for a holy God to do. Again, we are confronted with the mystery of God. The doctrine of the Trinity is not an attempt by the church to unravel the mystery around God. In fact, it deepens the mystery. It doesn't tell us everything about what God is and who he is. It raises more questions rather than give answers. But it does tell us about some important things about God – things that are life changing.

- Who is God? He is our heavenly Father who made us, takes care of us and calls us his dear children.
- Who is God? He is Jesus Christ who gave his life on the cross to re-establish our relationship with God. He reveals the way to God and to eternal life.
- Who is God? God is the Spirit in you giving you faith in God and guiding you in your daily walk as a Christian.

Faith in the Triune God acknowledges the might and majesty of God but at the same time trusts in a God who cares. The psalmist put it this way: *O Lord, our Lord, your greatness is seen in all the world! When I look at the sky, which you have made, at the moon and the stars, which you set in their places— what are human beings, that you think of them; mere mortals, that you care for them?*

If rational *knowing* all that God is becomes the substance and goal of our faith, aren't we merely reducing God to our level and then dismissing all that God is? Otherwise, how does one claim to have faith?

I have met many Christians over the years who have been puzzled by the idea of a Triune God, some even to the point of saying that they find it impossible to believe. I don't think we will be questioned about our understanding of the Trinity when we get to heaven.

After all, in human terms this is an impossible concept – let's leave it as a part of the mystery of God. But what is important is that in the **up** and **down** struggles of daily life we have a God who saves, a God who loves, a God who has gone to extreme lengths to ensure that you and I have a living relationship with him. Our God might be majestic and mighty but he is here and now and wants us to be with him in all eternity.

One of my favorite ways to attempt a kind of explanation/understanding is through a piece of a 6th century creed from Dublin known as *Tírechán's Creed* ~ when speaking of God it says:

He has a Son who is co-eternal with himself;

and similar in all respects to himself;

and neither is the Son younger than the Father,

nor is the Father older than the Son;

and the Holy Spirit breathes in them.

And the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit are inseparable.

Let us make it our prayer:

O Lord, our Lord, your greatness is seen in all the world! When I look at the sky, which you have made, at the moon and the stars, which you set in their places— what are human beings, that you think of them; mere mortals, that you care for them?

Amen.