

## "Here Am I Lord, Send Me"

Texts: Isaiah 6:1-8

Romans 8:12-17 (Series B. Trinity Sunday) Ps. 29

John 3:1-17

Let us pray:

*O God, light of the minds that know you, life of the souls that love you, and strength of the thoughts that seek you. Breathe your life into us that we may live in the manner you have appointed unto us and better love and serve you and one another. Amen.*

A story is told of a little girl who was asked to write an essay on "birth." She went home and asked her mother how she had been born. Her mother, who was busy at the time, said 'the stork brought you, darling, and left you on the doorstep.' Continuing her research she asked her dad how he'd been born. Being in the middle of something, her father similarly deflected the question by saying, 'I was found at the bottom of the garden. The fairies brought me.'

Then the girl went and asked her grandmother how she had arrived. 'I was picked from a gooseberry bush,' said grandma. With this information the girl wrote her essay. When the teacher asked her later to read it in front of the class, she stood up and began, "There has not been a natural birth in our family for three generations..."

When Jesus spoke to Nicodemus of being born from above - or being born anew - he was not talking of a natural birth. As he explained to Nicodemus, he was talking of a spiritual birth - a birth that was, and is, somehow, supernatural.

*"Very truly, I tell you," Jesus said, "no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit. What is born of the flesh is flesh, and what is born of the Spirit is Spirit."*

I want us to reflect on this - I want us to think about our unnatural birth - and about the mystery that is involved in it – the mystery of God - the God who made us and gave us our first birth - the God who saves us, by becoming one with us, dying with us and for us - the God who lives and works in us and gives us our second, our unnatural birth.

Our experience of God is a marvellous and mysterious experience. It is like looking at the picture of the older person - and the younger person; there is one reality - yet there is more than one reality.... And so it is with God.

❖ We have and we know the God of Isaiah -

the God who is high and lifted up in his temple,  
the God who speaks and brings forth all of creation,  
the God who is judge, lord, ruler, king,  
the God who is in light, inaccessible, hidden from our eyes.

❖ This God is strange to us:

this God is beyond us; this God we dare not touch, even though we know this God and he knows us, even though we see this God's signs all around us in the earth, the wind, the air, and the fire.

- ❖ And then we have the God who is in Christ:
  - the God who is Christ - the God who is lowly and humble
  - the God who reaches out and touches others; the God who serves others,
  - the God who walks the earth with us and cries and laughs with us,
  - the God who calls God Abba, Father,
  - the God who hungers and thirsts with us; the God who embraces us and encourages us,
  - the God who surrenders himself to death for us having only the promise and the hope of being raised again.
- ❖ And we have and know God the Spirit:
  - God the bringer of visions and of dreams,
  - God the source of strength and of hope,
  - God the supplier of healing words and of comfort-filling prayer,
  - God the wind, the breath, the air we breathe
  - God the transformer, the one who gives new birth, new life.

The God whose presence is within us and is present all around us; God calling to us - calling for us - calling through us, calling in us... As a Christian, I do *not know* all about God that there is to know - God is always greater than my knowledge of him - but I do know what God has shown me about himself – through his character and, since my conversion to the Christian faith some 52 years ago, I do acknowledge God in three different ways: *I know him, I experience him, and I love him* as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

The Christian Trinity is so very difficult – if not impossible – for us as mere mortals to wrap our brains around the mystical, mysterious concept of the Trinity, or in heavenly math-speak:  $1 + 2 = \text{One}$ .

Two out of the three persons of this, our Trinitarian God, are genderless although many refer to God as *Father* and some think of the *Spirit* as the feminine of Wisdom, or Sophia as it is written in Biblical Greek.

While our human minds cannot possibly grasp the Trinity in its complexities, we still wrestle with how to reduce it to fit in a small box in our minds that we can pretend to understand.

The mystery of the Trinity is nothing if not confusing. *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.

I think what most of us lack in our lives is a sense of the mystery of God and of the mystery of the life that God gives to us. For some reason we keep trying to develop one simple mental picture of God, one simple portrait of what we want God to be like or ought to be like.

Most of us like to box God - and we will go to incredible lengths to fit God into this box or that box - but God is greater than any box category - any system of thought or classification, and so is our life in him.

The point I am making is... either *humans* are sovereign or *God* is sovereign... that is our choice. Our ultimate authority is either the *reason* and *thinking* of human beings or it is God, the creator and source of all knowledge.

God is just and holy - demanding perfect obedience - yet God is merciful, loving, and forgiving - willing to forgive unto the seventh generation. I am a sinner - unworthy to touch the

hem of the gown worn by Christ, yet I am a child of God - intimately acquainted with his Spirit, a joint heir with his Son of all the riches of heaven.

When I became a Christian, I yielded myself to the claims of Jesus: his claim to be the Son of God; his claim to be the way, the truth, and the life; his claim to be in the Father, and the Father in him. Something drastic happened to my life. My vision began to change. I began to see new things in the world around me:

- ❖ I began to see the hand of God in my life and in the lives of people around me.
- ❖ I began to sense that God was in people, struggling to convince them of the beauty that is in them.
- ❖ I began to feel compulsions to do things that I had never done before - the compulsion to pray for others, to feel their pain - the obligation to tell others that God is good and is all around them.
- ❖ I began to experience within myself a growing peace, a peace that continues to grow.
- ❖ And, I began to experience through others - in their struggles and in their joys, in their sufferings and in their triumphs, the working of the God that is in my life.

My life is not natural - and I thank God for it. What I experience now is not something that came to me as the result of my first birth- nor did I learn it somehow in theological seminary - nor did I earn it by living a better life than most other people around me. It happened as a result of coming to *believe* in God and in his Son Jesus Christ and asking him to be my God, my personal God - in the way Jesus taught.

All true believers have this experience; all who hunger and thirst for righteousness, all who yearn for God, are satisfied. All true believers experience grace, and sense the giftedness of their lives.

One of my favorite ways to attempt make any sense of the Trinity – 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.*

All true believers know the incredible miracle of the indwelling God. True Christians know that they are born from above - and as in their first birth - the birth by water - they know it is totally miraculous, totally the work and the labour of God, and it is not by their own works.

And true believers, as a result of our experience, have come to see the words of the bible about God as true in every respect; we come to see that God has revealed himself:

- the way that describes God as three, yet one.
- the way that shows God as creator, redeemer, and sustainer.
- the way that speaks of God as Father and as Son and as Holy Spirit.
- the way that tells of God being a loving parent, a dear brother, and a caring presence, is a true way, a life-giving way.

If we can truly understand the mysteries of God, then that god, for me, is way too small. Only through faith can we believe in and answer the call of *heavenly things*. So, my dear friends, this is the truth that Jesus spoke of when he spoke to Nicodemus.

Nicodemus had a hard time grabbing hold of that truth. He couldn't quite understand how one could be born anew; it didn't seem natural to him -- and it isn't natural - rather it is divine. It is the gift of God - the Father, The Son, and The Holy Spirit. 'So we preach and so we believed,' says the Apostle Paul (1 Cor.15:11).

**May it be so, both now and forevermore. -- Amen--**

**Let us pray:** Creator, Savior, Sanctifier, grant us the blessing of Your peace as we accept the strength You have given us as joint heirs of Your eternal Kingdom. Expand and amplify our faith that its depth and constancy are revealed in the ways we answer Your call. We ask through each and all of the Three Eternal Persons in the sacred mystery of the Holy Trinity, who are One God, forever and ever. **Amen.**

**Prayer concerns:** *Matilda Molyneaux-Piper, Wess Bourgaize, Johannes Eidnes, Hanne Bourgeoise, Ellen Eriksen, Joanne Severyn, Peace in the middle East, the two Michaels in prison in China & COVID-19 patients, essential and front-line workers.*

**Make melodies in your heart with these hymns:**

- Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty # 413
- Father Most Holy # 415
- Here I Am, Lord # 574

**Birthday Celebrations.**

- *Matilda Molyneaux-Piper*

May 30, 2021