

Sermon for Trinity Sunday

Rev David Howells

Preached at St Aidan's in the Beach

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When you go into the store to buy a chicken for supper, how does being a Trinitarian Christian change the way you do things?

It is exactly this sort of question that John set out to answer when he wrote his Gospel.

[A note about the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit was *Sanctus Spiritus*, masculine noun in Latin, a translation of *He Pnuema*, neuter noun in Greek, a translation of *Ruach* a feminine noun in Hebrew. The Spirit went from *she* for Jesus to *it* for Greeks to *him* for the western Church. She had a sex change, well worth reversing.]

Back to the plot....

Trinitarian teaching, rooted largely in St John's teaching, links the Spirit with Jesus and with the Father. It is helpful to reverse the order of Father, Son and Holy Spirit, as John does here, to grasp what he is showing u

So the Spirit will come;

What does the Spirit of truth come to do?

To make you speak in tongues? To make you have near-magical healing powers? No.

She comes to lead you into all truth.

Which truth would that be? Pythagorean theorem? Evolution vs Creation? No

She comes to glorify Jesus. To show the God concealed/revealed in him. To teach his truths.

And those would be what, exactly?

Everything about the Father .

Last week we had to suffer through one of John's more opaque passages, where Jesus less-than-helpfully says that he is in the Father and the Father is in him and we will be in him which means the Father will be in us via him. And this was Jesus's response to being asked to show them the Father.

Now, tempting as it is to follow the labyrinth of trinitarian theology further I think it helps to return to the chicken.

This is because Trinitarian Theology is descriptive rather than prescriptive (as all good theology is) It tells us what the experience of life in the Spirit of Jesus is like. And it is like living in the Kingdom of the Father.

In the shops of Queen Street, within a stone's throw of this church, I will be faced not by one chicken, but an array. How do I chose? Closest? Biggest? Freshest? Cheapest?

So I say to God, "Good grief! I only want a chicken!" And God says, "Which chicken is true?"

Which chicken is true? How would you answer?.....

Perhaps the 100 mile limit reflects whether it is true to here.

Perhaps the level of pay given to the farmers is an indicator of truth.

Whether it has, like Lance Armstrong, been falsified with chemicals in food and drink, or in re-organised genes might tell you about truth.

Is this a chicken the way God meant a chicken to be? What is the creator's understanding of a chicken and you, here in the Beach in 2013?

It is hard to know the Creator's view.

So we have Jesus, a person not unlike us. We can imagine Jesus' opinion.

How we come to do that is by reading the Gospels, over and over again. Reading with the heart as well as the head. Reading and imagining we were there. Reading and getting to know Jesus, getting a sense of his personality, his style, his humanity, passion, gentleness, righteousness and ferocity, his kindness and humour.

We need Jesus.

The distinguishing thing about Christians is that we think that if we get to know Jesus we get to see the heart of God. We don't get a photo or a theology, we get a feel for the deep nature of God.

When Jesus said he was in the Father and the Father in him, it was that he was living so close to God that God seeped through him. He tuned his life to God, his Father, that the essence of God poured out of him. That is why you need, absolutely need to read the Gospels over and over.

I used to work in a rural parish and one day I went to see one of our folks who had a hog farm. This means he raised pigs. Smart, intelligent, social, family oriented, playful, affectionate creatures that ruffle through the undergrowth and dig up your aunty Betty's petunias. I entered a barn reeking of urine and found pigs in unending rows of squared off pens, inches deep in their own feces and pee. They were dirty and agitated. It made me think of Auschwitz. He then took me to see the chicken shed.

I am really keen on saving money and buying cheap. I see the cheap "chicken" and I see a dead hen carcass. I see "pork chops on special" and I see God's pigs in concentration camps. I know this is offensive. It is sitting with Jesus that messes you up. It makes you want to overturn the tables of money-changers and factory farmers.

But Jesus never said anything about factory farming! No. He didn't.

But if you ask God, who you know through Jesus, about your shopping, if you ask him about your grandchild's sadness, if you ask him about your confusion over what you just heard on TV, then you are opening yourself to his presence, not just in passing, but in a way that begins to affect you, infect you, colour your thinking.

This is the indwelling of the Holy Spirit leading you into all truth. Not merely factual truths, the zone of the sciences, but the deeper truths of justice, honesty, holy living, faith, simplicity, groundedness, anger, gentleness, truthfulness and kindness. The truth of living rightly in God's creation. Righteousness.

The Holy Spirit is the in-dwelling of the heart of God in you. It is the heart of God we know through the life of Jesus. It is what / who Jesus promised to send you.

So the whole Trinity Theology Thing is a description of the Practice of the Way of Christ.

Christianity is not a dogma or a doctrine, not a theology or a denominational membership. It is a way of living every minute, every decision, every experience and thought of the day.

The discipline of following in the way of Christ is that we work to open each of these to the *wondering* of "How would I do this if Jesus was standing right beside me now?" And that is the *wondering* of "How would I do this in the kingdom of the Father?" That act of wondering, of being open, of seeking is the invitation to the Holy Spirit to dwell in you and bring the life of Christ to you, and the heart of the Father to you.

There is no orthodoxy about chickens, by the way. It is your path, each one of you.

But there is the invitation to live in the Trinity, which is yours to receive.

Work to come to know Jesus. Open your heart to God's sneaky Spirit as she sneaks in, pockets loaded with blessings. Find the truth of the Father surfacing as you ponder the questions of your life.

So may the blessing of the Spirit, the Son and the Father be yours. Now and in the ages to come.