

May 30, 2010

Proverbs 8:1-4, 22-31

“Our most Excellent God”

Like many girls, I took dance classes while I was growing up: ballet, tap, jazz. I loved dancing! Then, when I began my ministry, I found myself needing to work an exercise program into my life. So—I went back to dancing again. I even performed in a recital with three other women. We did a tap number wearing sailor suits, hats and blue sequins. After the recital, which was attended by a classmate of my son’s, the boy told him: “I didn’t think a PASTOR could dance like that!”

We operate out of sharply defined roles and expectations. Rock stars don’t pray. Football players don’t do needlework. College professors don’t mud wrestle. Cheerleaders don’t study hard. Pastors don’t tap dance.

This kind of thinking leads us into prejudice and stereotypes. Hispanic lawn care workers aren’t intelligent. Asian students are all extremely bright, especially in math and science. Young black men aren’t safe- they might be violent. Middle Eastern men with beards, and Muslim women with head scarves are dangerous. Jewish people are money hungry and dishonest. (We could go on and on with this, couldn’t we?)

Unfortunately, this tendency carries into family life. Timmy is uncoordinated. Janice is always cheerful. Samuel is the quiet one. Sally is bashful. Matt is a go-getter. We ALL do this—let’s not waste time with denial or guilt—but just face the facts. We do this.

What effect does this have in our world? People are discouraged and don’t believe they can grow and develop. Huge obstacles must be overcome; hurt and pain abound. Life becomes flat, dull, blah, dark. It keeps us from knowing ourselves and others more completely.

What can we do? We can’t eliminate our negative stereotypes, expectations and prejudices entirely overnight. The first step is to acknowledge we have them! When we do this, a door is opened through which surprising messages can reach us. We allow a new spirit of possibility to enter. There is suddenly room for us to discover various unexamined truths about ourselves and others.

Today is Trinity Sunday, the day we celebrate our God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. This is the traditionally day for us to celebrate the many sides of God, the ways God appears and is manifested in human life.

This is a great Sunday for us to recognize we do the same thing with GOD that we do with each other. WE BOX GOD INTO OUR VISION AND EXPECTATIONS OF WHAT GOD IS LIKE.

- Susie is the sweet and docile one.
- GOD is the \_\_\_\_\_

We all have our own ways of filling in the blanks.

God is a stern parent who frowns on play and clowning- GOD THE FATHER.

God is JESUS CHRIST who insists in all times and places we are to be meek and mild- GOD THE SON.

God is always prodding us to display evidence that we are truly HIS- through healing abilities, prophecy, speaking in tongues—GOD THE HOLY SPIRIT.

Friends, even with the Trinity- One God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit- we box God into understandings that aren't even scriptural!

The Scriptures for today, Trinity Sunday, hold up the many ways God is God; ways that God is three in One. We are called to open ourselves to being surprised and delighted by who God is. TODAY, let's celebrate our "most excellent God".

What do we learn about God the Father in today's texts?

God is the Creator, our Father. That term often leads us to picture thunder, lightning, a bearded man—and for those of my generation, Charleton Heston! Our reading from Proverbs gives us a different slant on creation. Here God creates through or with WISDOM, a "master worker" with God, created by God. Wisdom speaks, describing the joy and delight shared with God at creation: "*I was daily his delight, rejoicing before him always, rejoicing in his inhabited world and delighting in the human race.*"

In Psalm 8, our Father God, Creator God, creates us and **crowns us with glory and honor**. In Romans 5 God **lavishes us with love and invites us to**

**share in his glory.** Throughout the Gospels Jesus addresses God as **Abba, Father**, with “Abba” being the term used by children in addressing their father—like “Daddy” or “Papa”.

Don't box God in! God the Father, Creator is delighted with us, loves his creation, and celebrates with a kind of wisdom which is quite different from the stern, serious expectations we often have of one who is WISE. God SHARES his glory and honor with us, and even shares his oversight of what he has created WITH us! How often do we picture God this way?

God is the Son, Jesus Christ, our Redeemer. In the Romans text Christ is the active agent- the one who brings us to God and shows God to us. Through him God's peace is given to us. Christ is an intermediary and interpreter. He buys us back from sin and death with his own suffering and death. A church member in a former parish shared with me that he saw Jesus as a kind of shadow or shade, standing between us and God the Father, protecting us from God's overwhelming light. On Trinity Sunday we need to remember that our faith embraces paradox, because we believe Christ also IS God, shining forth with God's brilliance himself!

Don't box God in! God the Son gives us **access to God's grace-** even in times of suffering, giving us the means to bear it and even to find our way to HOPE through it! How often do we picture and TRUST God the Son in this way?

God is the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the one through whom and in whom we actively experience God's love. The Spirit gives concrete form to divine love. The Spirit does this within us, where God's self converges with our own selves. This is how God speaks to us—in our thoughts, insights, feelings. This is how God can speak, hug, touch and challenge us through other people, by guiding and inspiring their actions.

Don't box God in! God the Holy Spirit is in direct contact with us at all times! How often do we picture and TRUST God the Holy Spirit in this way?

The Holy Trinity: God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit—this may seem to be an abstract concept that only students in seminary or scholars of theology need to think about and try to understand.

But that isn't true! The concept of the Trinity is essential for Christian faith and experience. The Trinity helps us to know the TRUTH: that God is present to us in more ways than we have yet experienced—than we have yet dreamed. The Father, Son and Holy Spirit have a multitude of aspects. Don't box God in!!!!----our most Excellent God! AMEN!