

Lectio Divina – Trinity Sunday - Year B

Reading

The eleven disciples set out for Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had arranged to meet them. When they saw him they fell down before him, though some hesitated. Jesus came up and spoke to them. He said, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go, therefore, make disciples of all the nations; baptise them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teach them to observe all the commands I gave you. And know that I am with you always; yes, to the end of time.'

Contexts

Matthew's Gospel

- Composed between 80-90 CE
- Written by a well-educated Jewish scholar (the term "according to Matthew" was added only in 2nd century). The author is not named in the text. A tradition beginning around 100 CE holds that the author is Matthew the disciple.
- Written for a predominantly Greek speaking Jewish audience, perhaps in Syria.
- Draws on Gospel of Mark (contains almost the whole of Mark's Gospel) and Q source and also has much unique material.
- Well ordered & structured account beginning with genealogy (Abraham).
- Has basic structure of narrative followed by discourse (often called sermons)
- Principal divisions:
 1. Infancy Narrative (1:1-2:23)
 2. Proclamation of the Kingdom (3:1-7:29)
 3. Mission & Ministry in Galilee (8:1-11:1)
 4. Opposition from Israel (11:2-13:53)
 5. Jesus, the Kingdom & the church (13:54-18:35)
 6. Ministry in Judea & Jerusalem (19:1-25:46)
 7. Passion & Resurrection (26:1-28:20)
- Shows how Old Testament texts and predictions are fulfilled in life & ministry of Jesus.
- Heavy concentration on divine origin and nature of Jesus.
- Son of David – healing, miracle-working Messiah of Israel.
- Jesus comes to fulfil the ancient promise and teach the truth about God – hence many controversies with the Scribes & Pharisees (may also reflect Matthew's community's struggles with their local Jewish neighbours).
- Concern that Jewish tradition not be lost.

Matthew 28:16-20 – things to notice

- This passage is traditionally known as "The Great Commission".
- Very short reading – only 5 verses.
- It is part of the story of the Ascension of Jesus.
- We are on a mountain again. Probably the mountain of the Transfiguration.
- Only the remaining disciples are present (11).
- Jesus appears, they fall on their knees, though some hesitate – why? Perhaps there are still some doubters in Matthew's community? Perhaps to show that belief is a gradual process?
- Jesus claims "all authority" in heaven and on earth
- Jesus' final commission to the disciples – "Go, therefore, make disciples..."

- Contains the Trinitarian formulae – “... in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” – may be part of the baptismal formula of Matthew’s community.
- Origin of Church’s reflection on mystery of God.
- “Teach them to observe the commands I gave you” – ie, teach them my way of life and the truth about God. Better translation is: ‘Teach them all that I have commanded you’.
- As Jesus is leaving he tells them that he will be with them until the end of time – how?

The Liturgical Context – why does the church choose this passage to reflect on for the Trinity Sunday ?

- Our return to the Ordinary Time of the Church year is marked by three feasts: Pentecost (last Sunday), Trinity (today) and the Body and Blood of Christ (next Sunday).
- These feasts celebrate our faith in God (Trinity) and the enduring presence of Christ in the Church and the world through the gifts of the Holy Spirit (Pentecost) and the Eucharist (Body & Blood of Christ – next Sunday) the enduring sacramental presence of Jesus which underlines the presence of God's spirit within us.
- In intellectual terms, God remains a mystery. For people of faith, God is known not by the mind, but by the heart. That is what spirituality and mysticism are about - our experience of God.
- In the first reading from the Book of Deuteronomy today Moses 'calls on the people to remember their unique experience of God and be amazed'. Moses comments on God's choice of the people as his own and how he delivered them from Egypt. At the end of the reading Moses makes this solemn declaration: 'Understand this today, therefore, and take it to heart: the Lord is God indeed, in heaven above as on earth beneath, he and no other. Keep his laws and commandments as I give them to you today, so that you and your children may prosper and live long in the land that the Lord your God gives you for ever.'
- The Second reading from Romans reminds the Romans that they are 'sons' of God through their experience of the Spirit – not a spirit of slavery and fear, but the spirit of 'sons' who cry out 'Abba, Father!' God is close to us and acts as a loving father towards us. We are children of God! It is an expression of our very close and intimate relationship with God through Christ and experienced in the Spirit.

Reflection

A quick look at the readings for today shows very clearly that the Feast of the Trinity is a celebration of God's love for humankind. It is a day for reflecting on who God is, not for trying to figure out how there can be three persons in one God.

The Church's focus today is on experience, not theology.

In intellectual terms, God remains a mystery. For people of faith, God is known not by the mind, but by the heart. That is what spirituality and mysticism are about - exploring our experience of God.

In the first reading God is proclaimed as a God of tenderness and compassion, slow to anger and rich in mercy; a God who walks with his people.

Paul's words in the second reading are born out of his belief that, having been made in the image and likeness of God, Christians must always act in the image and likeness of God.

Through our public liturgy, private prayer and contemplation we come to experience - to 'know' and feel in our hearts - that God loves us, accepts us, forgives us and constantly invites us into an ever-deeper experience of love.

When we allow God's heart to speak to ours in love we begin to absorb more of God's life into our own. We are being transformed. Our values and attitudes, our ways of looking at and being in the world start to change. We begin to see with God's eyes and feel with God's heart.

We become passionate about the things God is passionate about: speaking truthfully, acting with justice and integrity, looking out for each other and especially for the vulnerable, promoting peace and understanding, ending competition and discrimination, respecting life.

That makes us better people and our lives become a blessing for each other and for the world.

That is what it means to live out of God's great gift to us, the Spirit of Jesus Christ which God has placed in our hearts. God becomes enfleshed in us and we become stewards of God's grace and life.