

Holy, Holy, Holy!

Trinity, Year B – Isaiah 6:1-8, Romans 8:

preached by the Rector at St. Paul's, Henderson, May 31, 2015

Lord, take my eyes and see through them. Take my lips and speak through them. Take my soul and set it on fire with love for thee. Amen.

I've confessed to you before that I never really look forward to preaching on Trinity Sunday. The thing is that this is the only point in the whole Church calendar that is dedicated to the celebration of a philosophical construct of ontological existentialism. I am convinced that every preacher really only has one good sermon on the concept of the Trinity – and you have already heard mine! And of course, since I'm being intentional about using the Epistle readings this year, I spent much of the week wondering how to this morning's section of Paul's letter to the Romans as an entry point to the Doctrine of the Trinity.

And then I went to a dance recital last evening. Y'all know I try to get to the kids' things, when I know about them. Well, last night was my second end-of-year dance recital this year, and the closing number was a solo performance by our own Alexis Purdy. My eyes misted up as our own beautiful young lady combined American Sign Language and pointe ballet to bring to life the *praise* music classic, *I Can Only Imagine*. About halfway through the dance, it hit me hard enough that tears *filled* my eyes, that Alexis' own silent interpretation of what it will be like before the Throne of God connected *perfectly* with this week's reading from Isaiah, and *last* week's portion of Romans. Though I didn't use it then because we were focusing on the fire of Pentecost, last week Paul reminded us that, "the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words." And this week, the prophet Isaiah gives us the actual song.

We sing that song, of course – every time we celebrate the Eucharist: "Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might, heaven and earth are full of your glory! Hosanna in the highest!" It's on page 362 of the Prayer Book, but you don't need to look it up. Say it with me: "Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might, heaven and earth are full of your glory! Hosanna in the highest!" In the bulletin we call it the Sanctus, because in Latin, the song begins: "*Sanctus, sanctus, sanctus, dominus deus sabaoth!*" In case Murray Newman, my old seminary professor is right, and the language of heaven is *Hebrew*, you should know that the song might actually begin: "*Kadosh, kadosh, kadosh...*" Of course, it's possible that Dr. Newman was wrong, and the song of heaven is more like that described by C.S. Lewis at the end of the *Chronicles of Narnia*, and again last evening at the end of a dance recital – perhaps the song of Heaven is *indescribable* in its beauty and its sweetness and its power. So we raise our voices in the language *we* know. Let's say it again: "Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might, heaven and earth are full of your glory! Hosanna in the highest!"

Okay, we need to get back to the Doctrine of the Trinity. But for the next couple of minutes, as I remind us of some of that ontologically existential stuff, maybe only listen with one ear, maybe even close your eyes, and keep singing that song: "Holy, holy, holy! Lord, God of power and might!" If that's too much to keep repeating, just keep singing that most important part: "Holy, holy, holy! Holy, holy, holy! Holy, holy, holy!"

First of all, we don't worship some combination of gods, a god for this and a god for that. We can point to our pagan ancestors who had this sort of system down to a science, praying to one god for a plentiful harvest and another for victory in war and another for assistance in affairs of the heart. But there are plenty of folks around today who do essentially the same thing, as if we might change to a different form of God or a different way of appropriating God as easily as changing the channel on our TV. The God defined by the Doctrine of the Trinity is *one* God. God is not in competition. God is not in disagreement. God is not changeable.

Let's say it out loud: "Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might, heaven and earth are full of your glory!"

From the beginning of the Church, there have been those that have asserted that the Father is pretty much hands-off, a skillful *machine* maker who then stepped back to watch how the gears would eventually wind down. There are perfectly logical sounding people, some of them publishing their work as Christian theology, that talk about this sort of god. They want to lay the full burden of changing the world, or saving it, in the hands of mere *humankind*. And we need that kind of reminder that we are the hands of God in the world. But in the process of process, the fact sometimes gets lost that the Lord of Heaven is also Lord of earth. The Doctrine of the Trinity points to a Father who is has always been and continues to *be* involved in all of creation, and most especially in my life, and in yours.

"Holy, holy, holy! Holy, holy, holy! Holy, holy, holy!"

We don't worship a God who wants nothing but to be our pal without regard to real truth or ultimate righteousness. Although it has been around for a *very* long time indeed, one of the more popular modern heresies has to do with a Jesus who was fully human yet somehow less than fully divine. There are plenty of religions out there that follow the teachings of this good man, or that wise teacher. All of them have much to tell us about how we might better live our lives. But the Jesus to whom the Church looks is more than a wise moral teacher or a gifted worker of wonders. The Jesus to whom the Doctrine of the Trinity points is absolutely *nothing* less than the eternal Son of God, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God.

"Holy, holy, holy! Holy, holy, holy! Holy, holy, holy!"

Some in the early Church down through today's world want to think of God as the rabbit that pops out of our magic hat anytime we call, responding to our every desire, our every whim, our every petulant *demand*. The Doctrine of the Trinity points instead to a Holy Spirit of *power* that moved at the beginning of creation, a Holy Spirit of *power* that descended on the disciples as the driven fire we heard about last week, a Holy Spirit of *power* that continues to enliven the Church today.

"Holy, holy, holy! Holy, holy, holy! Holy, holy, holy!"

We worship a God who creates not for something to do, but so that the relationship of being can become part of the whole of creation. We serve a God who *redeems* because the greatest wound that the God of power and might can sustain is the fact that *we* so often turn our backs. We come before a God who *sustains* not out of some obligation, or because of our sniveling, whining entreaties, but because the Lord of heaven and earth, the Creator of all that is, cares for *us*, and values *us*, and *loves us*.

"Holy, holy, holy! Holy, holy, holy!"

We celebrate the Trinity today because we have been invited to be part of the love that *God* has experienced from before time, a love that can invigorate us, and enliven us, and *empower* us, to reach beyond ourselves and into the living Father and Son and Holy Spirit (sign of the Cross).

And with the seraphim around the Throne of God, in the year that King Uzziah died, and ever since, and forever and ever and ever, and with a girl standing on her toes and making the sign for her nail-scarred Savior (ASL sign), we *too* sing "Holy, holy, holy! Holy, holy, holy! Holy, holy, holy!" Amen.