

Sermon for Sunday 30 May 2021 @ Bethesda UMCBaltimore
Trinity Sunday/Peace with Justice Sunday
Scriptures: Isaiah 6:1-8; Psalm 29; Romans 8:12-17; John 3:1-17
"All of us"

We say preachers can preach on anything.

I'm reminded of my friend Bill Holmes, who preached @ Northaven Methodist Church in Dallas the Sunday after President Kennedy's assassination on Friday. Bill said, " We all bear some responsibility for that tragedy".... There'd been a radio, or TV, report of school children in Dallas cheering when word of Kennedy's shooting was announced ...And that evening the Dallas police came and told Bill and his family they needed to vacate the parsonage for some days, or weeks, for their safety.

Since those days, most mainline Protestants have followed the Common Lectionary, and so today we can make our main theme Trinity Sunday ... that doctrine that confuses everybody and makes non-Christians wonder how we can say we believe in one God.

In our United Methodist calendar, this is one of the six Sundays we annually take up a collection for a specific mission cause, in today's case Peace with Justice, and think and pray about how we're doing on that subject.

Then, this year, we are so close to Memorial Day that this becomes Memorial Day week-end, and hence, this is Memorial Day Sunday.

Besides all that, this week-end marks the 100th anniversary of the Tulsa Massacre, when a group of white leaders burned to the ground a highly developed, prosperous Black portion of that Oklahoma city, killing something like 300 Blacks, and blamed them for it. I never heard about that, growing up, even though I lived less than 100 miles away, and we had our own lynching just a few years later, also destroying our Black business community.

So. Start with Isaiah, who wants us to remember, and believe, something is going to pick us up and put words in our mouth that won't let us do our own thing. "And I said, 'Here am I. Send me.'"

Then listen to the people of Israel, the Jews, repeat, lift up a psalm together, say or sing, until they know it by heart, since most folks in those times couldn't read or write, but they could memorize and follow one another, "The Lord sits enthroned over the flood; the Lord sits enthroned as king forever; May the Lord give strength to his people!/May the Lord bless his people with peace!"

Moving right along, we have Paul explaining faith a lot like Isaiah, "For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God...and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ --- if, in fact, we suffer with him so that we may also be glorified with him."

And of course, summing up with the Gospel, in the young Hebrew leader, Nicodemus, coming by night to question Jesus about how such things can be, hearing the Gospel writer speak for Jesus, the words we learned in Sunday School, "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life."

There. I've said it all. The long preparation, the six weeks of Lent, are over. The resurrection, Easter Sunday, the Great Fifty Days of describing all we can about that, concluding last Sunday with Pentecost, where we agreed the truth is, we ARE together, we DO understand, we speak a common language that unites all humankind, and all creation, animals and stars and new babies and waterfalls and peace truces and new takes on equality and justice in praise and thanksgiving and obligation to do all we can to respond to this wonderful reality, in whatever ways our situation and gifts, our needs and boundaries, provide us ... to be thankful, to give thanks, to accept the good news that we know by heart, and to live it, as long as we exist.

Three persons. Blessed Trinity. I recently heard love described in a way that works for me when I'm called to preach on Trinity Sunday. Listen: "Love needs three people. You have to know, to learn, to love yourself. That's basic. But love is incomplete when you're alone. By definition, it reaches out to embrace someone else, and to be embraced by someone as well. But truly, both people, loving one another, do not complete the loving just by themselves. They need someone to focus on together to make love fully alive; and they need to be loved back by someone who receives their love, someone who can fully give back at least to two others who have made love come alive to him or her. They need a crowd.

I haven't worn down that description of our way of speaking of God, as Christians. Like Pentecost, it seems to describe love as we see it, and give it, and share it, in this fellowship we call "The Way," or "The Church." Everything I laid out above, in all the topics we lift up today, and the scriptures that also highlight facets of the one True God we experience in Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit ... everyone we love, everyone who loves us, everything about love that adds up when we thank God, and trust God, and spell out God in the places God sets us and with the gifts God endows us ... all these come together in a beautiful threesome I call love, God, Jesus, Spirit of all.

Work on it. I believe it will play well. God comes to us in more than one way. We come to life in more than one way.. God speaks as all three of us. We answer back in a group, in at least three versions That's what mission is. Work sent by a group, supported by a group, coming to us from within, and from this other one, and then that one. All of us. Become little Christs, as Luther said.

All of us. Father/Mother, Son/daughter, and Holy Spirit.

All of God. All of us. Amen.