

FOUR LAST SERMONS: THREE - for 7th June 2020,
Trinity Sunday, Yr A, St Peter's Limpsfield,
streamed Eucharist
Matthew 28:16-20

The beautiful mystery

May I speak in the name of God, Creator, Redeemer and Sustainer.

I've been doing a bit of stargazing with my family this week, especially successfully looking out for the International Space Station whizzing around, and being amazed at the two astronauts joining up with it. For someone like me whose most vivid space memory is coming home from school to watch the Challenger Shuttle disaster unfold, this has been a good recovery of the mind-boggling wonders of space. Even for those who understand the science much better than I do, space is fundamentally a beautiful mystery.

The Christian understanding of God which we celebrate today - as long as we don't make God too small - is also mind-boggling, and a beautiful mystery. God is so big that we can't know all about him. We can't squeeze him into our heads or our words. But we do trust and know some amazing things about God. In the very beginning, God the Father created the world. And He's still creating today! Jesus, God's Son, is God come to be with us - we remember him being born as a baby at Christmas, and gathering his friends together, and doing amazing things, dying for us, and rising again, and going up! And who were the disciples waiting for when Jesus went up? The Spirit!

We celebrated the Holy Spirit coming last week at Pentecost, and that is with us, making us strong and full of life. So God is THREE - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. And God is also ONE.

In the 19th century, this understanding of God, the doctrine of the Holy Trinity, was not mentioned much, at least in the western church. 'It's not in the bible, and it doesn't make sense anyway' was the general opinion.

This has changed radically in recent years as the church has rediscovered the God who is social, relational and loving, rooted more firmly in the ancient and abiding liturgy and worship of the Eastern Orthodox churches, where the Trinity never went out of fashion. And the recognition that the references to 'Father, Son and Holy Spirit' in the New Testament actually take for granted a Christian life embedded in Trinitarian worship.

We have heard as our reading today the climax and crown of Matthew's gospel: it is open-ended - it invites each one of *us* to enter the story. Being a person in the image and likeness of God involves existing in a relationship, because God himself, one and three, is the communion of the Father, of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. We are invited to participate in God's own bonds of love. Though we might feel the poorer for not understanding, we had better instead revel in the beautiful mystery of the Trinity, which sparkles all around us.

The mystery which makes our ordinary extraordinary. The mystery which is as vast as the heavens, and is minutely imprinted on our DNA as surely as the stardust. The mystery and gift which invites us earthy human beings to be and to live, to love and to grow in the divine light, the being of God, the Holy Trinity.
Amen.

James Percival, Team Rector