



# SAINT LUKE'S

## "THE NATURE OF GOD"

TRINITY SUNDAY

GENESIS 1:1-2:4A

PSALM 8

2 CORINTHIANS 13:11-13

MATTHEW 28:16-20

A SERMON BY THE REV. CAROLINE STACEY

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Think about the relationships in your life – past and present – that are the most loving, that have nourished you. Think especially of those relationships when *being* loved has changed you. Perhaps made you more able to love – not only the one who loves you, but others too. Being loved changes us. We start to see ourselves as love-able, cherish-able, valuable. And this in turn can transform us into loving others more generously.

We know that love also brings with it some complicated feelings. It can be disorienting how much we care. We worry when our beloved suffers. And those we love most can push our buttons and infuriate us like no-one else. We are most crabby with those we love and who we know love us; it is safer to be grumpy with them than with others. Our most loving relationships also lay our hearts wide open so we are more vulnerable to being hurt. It is all part of the mystery and risk of love.

On Trinity Sunday, we celebrate God in three Persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. It is the only Sunday of the Church Year devoted to a doctrine rather than an event. But underneath the esoteric theological distinctions, we are in fact talking about love, about the most important part of life as we know it. The Trinity is all about the mystery and joy of love – human and divine. In seeking to understand the mystery of love, as people of faith, we start with God. The doctrine of the Trinity didn't become defined until the 4th century Councils<sup>1</sup> but Christians see it in embryo from Chapter 1 of Genesis. Before humans are breathed into life, God says: “Let *us* create humankind in our image”.<sup>2</sup> The first reference to God as plural in the Bible is in Genesis 1, today's reading. The Bible never gives us a quantum formula for the Trinity, but the Bible tells us very clearly that God *is* relationship in God's very self. *Loving* relationship. More - God doesn't only love God. From before time, God loves beyond God's self. That's why we are here! This is central to understanding what God means by love: God loves looking outwards. From Genesis 1, all of God's energy – which is love - is focused on God's beloved creation. And as the “story of everything” unfolds in Genesis, human beings are the crowning glory of God's loving energy.

<sup>1</sup> Councils of Nicaea in 325 and Constantinople in 381

<sup>2</sup> Genesis 1:26

It is always true that *We love because God first loved us.*<sup>3</sup> We are made in God's image so we love too. The Trinity is as close to us as our own intimate relationships. When we feel the complexities of love, this also is God's image in us. When we feel the risk of love, of putting our hearts on the line, the weight of commitment, of sacramental vows – marriage, monastic vows, baptismal vows – we are about the best and the hardest thing we know – the callings of love. I don't know if it is true to say that God "feels" love the way we do, but in Jesus, God shows us that willing vulnerability is part of love and violence is not. It is safe to love steadily and deeply; not because the commitments of love are without risk but because God lives in the risk itself.

The church elevates marriage as an icon of the love of God. The lifelong commitment of two people mirrors the faithful relationship of Father, Son and Holy Spirit, giving and receiving. Marriage at its best is both freely sacrificial and joyful, without keeping score because it is a covenant not a contract. In fact, the Trinity is the wellspring of *all* our life as Christians, not only marriage. God replenishes the well from which we give. When we are nourished by God's love, the feeling of scarcity that breeds resentment and keeps score is dissolved. The renewing love of the Trinity comes to us in infinite ways, and particularly in bread and wine, in Scripture as it feeds and renews us, and in the experience we sometimes dazzlingly have of joy in our Christian community. God's love gathers us around many Tables to form God's own family.

The Trinity shows us that there is enough love and that there always will be enough love to go around, because the divine love is inexhaustible. We do not have to sustain our loves in our own strength alone. Our human loves are always nestled within the love of God. We do not need to create this love. We only need to be open to receive it and then share it. The more we love, the more we are able to love. Becoming more and more open to receiving this divine love is the most joyful life possible for a human being.

So as we celebrate Trinity Sunday today, we are celebrating love itself: the mystery,

<sup>3</sup> 1 John 4:19

the joy, the possibilities of the love that we do not have to create, or sustain by our own effort, only open our hearts to receive and share. The Trinity is the love that has no end, the love that conquers death, the love that is calls us into the risk of love from the cradle to the grave and beyond.

AMEN

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