

Pastor Roy's Sermon from May 22, 2016 (The Holy Trinity)

Have you ever been baffled while thinking of God as Trinity or by the language of the creeds? Do you find yourself thinking, "Its ok, church language doesn't *really* have to make sense." Or, "It's too complicated for me to understand. As long as someone else gets it, that's what matters."

The writers of the creeds believed what they wrote. The arguments over which words to choose became violent at points. How had Jesus' words of looking inward, listening for the Spirit, finding love and justice with compassion become something external of one size fits all—where one group of people determines the truth for everyone else?

In the 4th century Church leaders had come to believe that individual and community destiny hinged on the precise language one uses of God. Heresy would lead to great harm for the future of the church and members' present salvation. Creeds were necessary to know what to believe. For some what the church believed became more important than how one lived and loved.

How much more important this correctness was as Roman emperors wanted everyone to agree about God so their empire would be stable! Imagine an empire which depended on the church for its stability! That was the 4th century.

The church always expresses local customs and values. It is always influenced by culture and society. But the Spirit of Christ moves throughout creation regardless of what humans are doing at any given time, even those who call ourselves the church.

So why do we say the Creeds every week if they are very much a product of the church 300 years after Jesus and the apostles? If the Creeds reflect the struggles and values of the 4th century, why do we say them now? The Trinity is central in the Creeds because there was conflict about the nature of God in the fourth century. There is nothing in the creeds about love, or salvation, or prayer, or trust. Basically the creeds say, I believe that these things about the triune God and the church are true.

Language of God must be personal in order for it to mean anything to us. Everything we say about God is a "for example, God is like. . ." We will never understand God. We will never understand exactly how God is personal, how God draws all creation together or links us into that togetherness. Faith is not understanding—faith is trusting in hope and mercy. Faith is falling into the mercy of God—Whoever, However God is--or is not.

So Trinity Sunday is not about needing to believe a certain thing about God or even understanding what we are supposed to believe about God. Trinity Sunday is a celebration that God and what we believe about God is personal—absolutely personal--and should be in our own language. It's about relating to God, to the mercy of God, to the compassionate love of God.

The Scriptures and Creeds, and the Lutheran Confessions of the 16th century point us in the direction of God. They help us to know where to go looking for God and what God might look like when we get there. But they do not tell us who God is—that requires our own original research and exploration.

The doctrine of the Trinity is God in fourth century language. We don't live in the fourth century. We don't live in the first century. But God remains. God as the ground of all being remains. This ever-flowing, never ending mercy of God remains. God who Creates, redeems, sustains--remains. It is our job to speak of God and love in ways that are faithful to our experience. We do not pray someone else's prayer. We do not live someone else's faith.

What is the essence of your faith? Trinity is about God in relationship with Godself and with all of creation. It is not about believing in someone else's God. Trinity is about giving us all a place to go looking for God. So that is my challenge and invitation to us all. Pray and rediscover God, today.