

'Added Dimensions', a sermon for Trinity Sunday, by Rev. Lance Weisser, May 27, 2018, St. Paul's Cathedral, Kamloops

Before I begin, I would simply like to say that it is an honour for me to be asked to give the message in the presence of The Most Reverend David Crawley. Your Grace, we thank you for coming all this way to be with us and presiding over our worship and Eucharist.

In the Name of The Father and of The Son and of The Holy Spirit, Amen.

My dear friends in Christ,

This is the Sunday designated as Trinity Sunday, the only Sabbath of the Church year dedicated to a doctrine, a doctrine derived from Scripture, yet not explicitly found in Scripture--no where in the Bible do the words 'The Holy Trinity' appear--yet is a doctrine central to our faith, while exceedingly difficult to try to adequately demonstrate. Many clergy simply decide to preach on one of the lessons for today, and avoid the challenge altogether--or better yet, head to Prince George. Some bring in ice cubes, along with a bowl of cool water, and then water in the form of steam in order to dramatically illustrate how indeed one element can take three distinct forms while remaining one element. And a professor at The Toronto School of Theology shared with us how, if you have three lit candles, you can take two of them and bend their flames to join the third to create one large and single flame, then return them again to being three. Each can be on its own and yet together are one. It is sort of the Bill Nye The Science Guy approach to explaining the Trinity. It satisfies on only one level--however, because in both instances, they fail the test.

For water remains just water, whether or not it is ice, steam, or liquid--and fire is just fire, whether or not it is combined. And these examples really only prove one of the great historic heresies--that of Modalism--God simply remaining God, but choosing to manifest characteristics of Himself in different ways at different times, then returning back to being God as Creator. That is not the God we worship, and not the God of the historic Creeds we proclaim each Sunday. God The Creator, God The Son, and God The Holy Spirit were distinctly themselves 'before all worlds', cannot be combined to show themselves as one element--like water or like fire--because each is distinctly different from the other, while yet remaining One, and so is a profound mystery which defies neat and tidy science experiments.

In order for me to preach the Trinity without tying myself up in knots showing how three are one and one are three, I will instead become very personal.

As a young boy I had big problems with God in three Persons, blessed Trinity. I had in those days recurring nightmares over the 1951 film version of Ebenezer Scrooge and his being visited by three ghosts--three spirits--and in particular, the ghost of Jacob Marley which scared the pajamas off me. So to then stand to sing every Sunday 'The Doxology': 'Praise God from Whom all blessing flow....Praise Him above, ye heavenly hosts, Praise Father Son and Holy

Ghost' made me not want to know anything about--or worse--be visited by any ghost, holy or otherwise. I also had big problems with God as Three Persons after Janie Urbach and I disobeyed our parents and went to The RKO Palace and saw Joanne Woodward in 'The Three Faces of Eve' about a woman being treated for multiple personality disorder.

What did ring my chimes, did move, inspire and fill me with wonder was God The Father, most particularly after my parents took me to the grand opening of Cecil B. DeMille's 'The Ten Commandments' starring Charlton Heston as Moses. I sat there so dumbstruck with awe, I didn't touch my popcorn. For days afterward I would wander through the woods behind our parsonage, homemade staff in hand, hoping against hope to come across a burning bush and hear the voice of the 'I AM'.

Perhaps I wasn't alone--and that many children like me hunger and long for and seek divine rescue. No matter how loved or held or cared for one is at home, our fine-tuned child's radar knows that beyond the walls of home, all is not right--there are sins and doings and darkneses all about which adult powers aren't able to resolve--and I as a boy was in great need of mighty interventionist works done before my eyes to counter all the wrong I was experiencing when no one was around to protect me. So yes, I wanted to raise my homemade staff and call out 'Behold His Mighty Hand!' and have miracles performed before my juvenile eyes, and find deliverance for every child being abused or neglected or mistreated. It was in those days for me, all about God The Father, The El Shaddai, The I AM.

This affinity with God as Father, as parent, as primary mover, creator, lasted a long long time. My rock solid belief that God The Father was looking after me kept me strong. But then, around age thirteen my love for God as Father got taken over by the Deacons of our Baptist Church--who, in their collective wisdom--kind of rounded up my whole Sunday School class and had us attend special instruction week after week. No one to my knowledge--including my pastor father--told me that these were classes held for the sole purpose of preparing us for accepting Christ as Saviour through adult baptism. But that day did come--that day when we were to follow the example of Jesus--and I was dressed in a kind of white ice cream vendor outfit and the large tin baptistery facing out into the sanctuary was slowly filled with warm water and we dutifully stood in a long silent lineup, waiting for our turn to enter this oversized bathtub--this undersized swimming pool--and then suddenly I was standing chest-deep beside my father who was waist-deep in his black robes, looking to me rather out of place. The whole congregation was witnessing the solemn moment, and as he asked me questions about accepting Christ as my Lord and Saviour, my toes suddenly came in contact with what I immediately recognized as the webbing of his rubber hip-wader fishing boots--the army green hip-waders I'd seen him wear standing in streams and creeks--he was wearing so he could remain dry and change out of his robes quickly. And, the absurdity of it all got to me and made me laugh, at which point he kind of immediately put me down under the water. Unlike everyone else, I came up coughing and choking and thrashing about, fighting for air and trying

to stop from drowning, and grabbed the velvet curtains and pulled off a ring or two before fighting my way to the exit. No one can ever say I wasn't baptized.

At thirteen, just because the Church wanted me baptized and kind of got me to confess Him as Lord, I wasn't nearly ready to fully embrace the second personhood of God--God The Son-- for in my eyes as a young teen Jesus didn't compare with the God of Moses, the God of King David, the God of the Psalms, and it would take a lot of living before I knew--and more importantly, accepted--God in Christ, God as my Lord and Saviour. I wanted my enemies slain and some vengeance taken. I wanted to see waters parted and injustices paid for. But then came the day when I, like Saul of Tarsus, had to confront myself and see that for all my so-called woundedness, I was the same as those who were doing the wounding. I was causing others to feel hurt and wounded and slighted, and had myself become the enemy to those I had pushed away, maligned and mistreated. Suddenly I needed God to be personal: to be forgiving and nurturing, loving and understanding, and I needed God to be like me, to be my brother and my friend--to even more importantly be my Teacher and my Guide and I no longer craved signs and wonders, but rather a Saviour who walked with me and talked with me and told me I was His own--who knew me and who was revealing Himself back to me, and helping me make choices in a difficult world--helping me understand that suffering for others was the ultimate sign of maturity. It was then and only then that I gradually came to embrace God The Son, God my Saviour, God my Redeemer and Lord.

Two weeks ago the Church observed The Ascension of our Lord--that day when the risen Christ left this earthly realm to reside with The Father.

Last week we celebrated Pentecost, when God The Spirit comes with tongues of fire after Christ ascends in order to become our living presence in the absence of the crucified, risen, and ascended Christ. And ever since that first Pentecost, it is God The Holy Spirit who attends to our needs, makes known the divine Will and guides our hearts and minds into carving our way forward in a complex and increasingly difficult world. As our Territory Church leadership gathers for Equip in Prince George, they are doing so asking for the guidance of The Holy Spirit.

When votes are taken at Synods and Councils and during the making of Church polity and policy, participants are required to vote not according to their political, personal, or cultural persuasion, but rather fervently pray as a governing body for God The Holy Spirit to come down and visit voting members with the Spirit's will so that their own will is surrendered to the will of God through The Holy Spirit. Indeed, for over two thousand years, it is the Church Catholic which rises or falls on the basis of whether or not it is following The Holy Spirit, or simply acting out of human political determination and nationalistic error and ego-centred sin. It is The Holy Spirit which would have The Church see its error in rounding children up and removing them from their parents and culture, The Holy Spirit which requires of us to reconcile and repent and resuscitate relations with the First Nations people whom we have so generationally wronged.

There's an old Willie Nelson hit that goes, '...it's a long long while from May to December, but the days grow short when you reach September' and maybe some of you like me sense and feel

that more and more and more, we are living out our days in the September of our years. I recall turning 65 and making such a huge deal of it, claiming how I was now a bonafide Senior until a friend quite a bit senior to me gave me a look which said, 'Oh my, Lance--it's going to take a lot more living yet before you can claim to have entered OUR ranks'. So when I turned 70, I no longer wanted to make a big deal of it, because I knew in my heart that yes, now finally I had in fact reached 'September'. And it is in these most precious of years that I truly do feel the embrace and sense the near presence, the constant closeness of God The Holy Spirit, for so much of what I now treasure and wish to hold dear to me is found in the form of spirit.

This is the year--the only year--when our dog Elmo and I are the same age, for he is ten. I look at him, no longer able to leap and run and bound up stairs--how some days he can only manage to lay on his bed and sleep. I look at him and see that as his physical self diminishes, his spiritual being grows ever larger--larger than he himself is--pervasive, beautiful, and somehow inextinguishable. And my mind turns to my pool of friends, those bonafide Seniors, some much more my senior, and how over coffee I can almost see the aura of their spirit, how they too are becoming that much less physical yet so much more spiritual, and feel how my heart almost does that leap of joy in listening to them, knowing we don't ever stop growing because--as we find in the historic Creeds--The Holy Spirit is the Lord, the Giver of Life--and the spirit is greater than the body. And it is the spirit which defines who we are and it is the spirit which lives long after we physically depart this life.

In my childhood years, when we were on summer vacation road trips, our dear mother was given to randomly ordering our father to stop unexpectedly at cemeteries, ones usually outside the unknown town we just passed through--just stop the car and make us all get out--and suddenly there we three children were, hanging around all these strange tombstones, swatting away horseflies, trying to find some shade, while she intently pondered inscriptions and even used a little pencil and notebook to figure out the lifespans of those departed, always with this little smile on her lips. And we'd sigh and carry on like we were being tortured, telling her we were hot, wanting to be anywhere else, embarrassed by her quirky oddness. "But there's so much life here," she'd say, studying the very small stone of what had to have been a little child. "Can't you feel it? So much life!" And we'd roll our eyes like she'd once again confirmed for us that we had a mother who was 'certifiable'.

And now, I'm her.

We sit here together, in this old old cathedral church of ours, and I can hear her even now saying, 'There's so much life here--so much life--can't you feel it? Can't you feel it?' And yes, we do, we do indeed feel the near presence of those of our number who now dwell among the Saints, yet remain so very present, we celebrate God The Holy Spirit whose constant presence in our lives helps us know we are all connected, helps us know we are all cared for, helps us navigate the difficult path which ultimately leads to our spiritual unification with One God,

Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier. We who feel our physical selves diminishing and our spiritual selves growing, keep ever on our lips the prayer of David, the prayer of Psalm 51: "O Lord, Show Thy Mercy upon us, And grant us Thy salvation....Make clean our hearts within us, And take not thy Holy Spirit from us."

Today we celebrate our Blessed Trinity, our God, Creator, Redeemer, Sanctifier, our God made manifest throughout our earthly years, Our God, The Three In One.

Amen