

## **Isaiah 6:1-8; Psalm 29**

Who is this God we worship? The one we call Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The Holy Trinity. Three-in-one and One-in-Three?

As the early church spent time trying to figure out who this crucified, dead, resurrected and ascended Jesus was, they also began to wonder about who this God was that they worshiped.

It is from this wondering that the Christian church began to describe God as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Some, particularly in the West, tried to use metaphysics and logic to describe how this understanding was not talking about three gods but one God. A process that frankly makes my head hurt. Others, particularly in the East, looked at Jesus as God's best self-revelation to us and understood the Trinity to be an attempt to describe how we have encountered God in our lives of faith.

The Jews had their own answer for who God was. You find it frequently in Exodus and elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible. Who is this God you follow? This is the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The God who brought us out of the land of Egypt. That's their formula. This language points people to stories. Stories they would have known. Oh! It's that God. Not the other god. It's the God that calls people to hit the road out of the blue and travel until God stops them. It's the God who is faithful to God's promises, even when we aren't. It's the God who hears the cries of God's people and rescues them.

It's a bit like how you know about great Aunt Joan, who you never met. Which Aunt Joan? Oh, the one whose husband died young, and she raised her kids on

her own while running a diner. The one who also made sure all her kids went to college and then attended herself. Oh, that Aunt Joan. And because you know those stories, you know exactly the character of that aunt even if you never met her.

Who is this God? The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The God who brought us out of the land of Egypt. But even that doesn't tell the whole story, does it? Because that story would not be complete without the women. So, it is the God of Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebecca, Jacob and Rachel (although his wife Leah had more children). The God who does incredible things through men and women of faith. Men and women who are imperfect, but who trust in God.

Who is this God we worship? It is the God who created all that exists. That's what we believe. What the story of Genesis tells us. That God spoke all of this into being. God created this incredibly complex and inter-related universe. From our study of this universe, we know that at all levels- macro to micro- everything has its place and that things work best when all is in balance. A relationship where each thing does its work. Plays its part.

Does this give us a clue to the character of God? To the reasons why God created us to be in relationship. Something we know from scripture, "It is not good that man should be alone." and from our own study of humans and human nature.

God is the one who keeps calling us to be in relationship with God and with each other in a way that works with- not against- one another. A way that mirrors how God's creation works when it is at its best, doesn't it?

I wonder, is this so because that is the nature of who God is?

God has said about Godself in answer to the question from Moses-. “Who shall I say sent me?” I Am Who I Am. I am what I am. What is God? Creator of all things. Lover of that creation, especially humans who are created in God’s image. God is Abba to Jesus. God is source of the Holy Spirit. God is the one who pursues human beings and relationship with them in a way that is almost obsessive.

We speak of God as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit because there are stories that we know about these. Many about Jesus, God’s best self-expression to us because we can understand a human being. Who knows what it is like to stub a toe, not be able to sneeze, laugh so hard you have to pee. But there are also stories of this Holy Spirit that is both like a rush of violent wind, but also a cool evening breeze. That gives us courage and ability to do amazing things. I think we have all had those kind of experiences too.

But even this does not fully express who God is. For we can never say God IS this. We can only say, God is like this. For to fully understand who God is we would need to be God. The Israelites expressed the immensity of God in human terms, like in our reading from Isaiah, where just hem of God’s robe would fill this space and then some! This is the God whose very voice makes the land to dance, who sits enthroned above all the earth. A God who is so immensely other, we cannot comprehend God. In this way, God is a holy mystery to us humans.

But we have these stories. Ones that give us a glimpse and chance of catching the sense of this God. This God is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. God who is in relationship within Godself. Just like this world God spoke into being is in relationship within itself and with God. This God is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, a

relationship that so intertwines these three that you almost can't tell where one leaves off and the other begins.

Some may wonder, rightfully, what does this matter? It matters what the character of God is. Because if we do not explore the boundaries of that character, define that (as best we ever can) according to the witness of scripture and the church through time, then others will try and define it for us. And when we get it wrong, awful things happen.

When we define God as the one who desires to wipe the sinful from the face of the earth, it's easy to see everyone but you and those you like as the sinful. And receive divine permission for whatever atrocities you commit. When we define God as one who brings special blessing to this nation or that, we set a boundary around who is righteous and who isn't that can lead to some of the worst of human behavior.

While it is eternally incomplete and imperfect- God who is Trinity, who is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, whose very essence is in being in such a tight relationship there is not three but one, leads us to the ministry of Jesus- God's best self expression to us. A ministry that came to save the world, not condemn it. A ministry that said God's love and care is for everyone.

This is the one who claims us in the waters of baptism, calls us beloved children, pulls us into the loving dance of Trinity as a partner. This is the one who asks the question, whom shall I send to invite others into this dance? To open their eyes to see the wonderful interrelationship between all things. And we answer with Isaiah, "Here I am, send me."

And when we have these stories right. When we have this understanding of God who is in relationship within Godself and with the whole world, we can go forth this Memorial Day weekend and sing “God Bless America” without adding the unspoken, “And the Hell with everyone else.” We can go forth and see the beloved image of God in those we agree with politically and those we don’t. We can go forth and know that I am a vital part of this inter-related creation. That what I do and say affects not only me, but those around me. And the very creation that I live in.

We do not need to understand full the Trinity any more than we do how Jesus comes to us in, with, and under the bread and wine at communion. Both are holy mysteries. But this description of God opens our minds to a clearer vision of who God is and who we are in relationship to God and the world. A vision that calls us, just like Jesus did, to love God with all that we are and to love our neighbor in the same way that God in Jesus loves us. And perhaps, that is all we really need to know.