

Trinity Sunday 2003  
“Eyes to see the Hidden God.”  
The Rev. Thomas W Simmons IV

Today is called Trinity Sunday. One thing that strikes me about Trinity Sunday is how *unusual* it is compared to the other special days on our liturgical calendar. Most other special Sundays are named for a significant event, usually from the life of Christ. There is Palm Sunday, Transfiguration Sunday, Easter, etc.

Today however, is named for a doctrine of Christian theology, the Trinity. How interesting: a *day* named for a *doctrine*!

But when we talk about the Trinity we're talking about a lot more than just a DOCTRINE. **We're talking about God...as a community of Beings.** There's the Father...and the Son... and the Holy Spirit. Each of these Persons is unique and yet what they share in common makes them One.

These Three share a relationship that is so intense and loving and harmonious that it brings them together as One. **This is one of the great mysteries** of the Christian faith and it's something a lot of the best minds of the church have worked very hard to understand and define.

But understanding God isn't easy, is it? God is often elusive and hard to locate, box-in and analyze. God is revealed in all creation, and yet he remains “out there,” kind of abstract, mysterious and hidden. We have the Scripture, the written record of what God has done, but sometimes it's a little hard to connect to it's stories, to experience the God portrayed in them. **We hear a lot about God, and yet where is he?**

We say our prayers to God and sometimes we have a sense of the presence of God, or we see God working in us and other people, sometimes we even see miracles. And yet God can often feel just beyond our grasp.

His presence is mysterious. He often feels distant or even hidden from most of us. Jim Carey in the new movie *Bruce Almighty* portrays this quite well and I think most of us can relate to it from our own experience seeking God.

We see the same thing in our Scripture lessons this morning. They're about knowing God...who is both hidden and revealed. **They teach us how we can experience God** and live with God and how knowing God influences our life.

Our Scripture lessons show two guys – Moses and Nicodemus - and both are looking for the God Who is Hidden.

As a young man in Pharaoh's court Moses heard God's call to rescue his people from slavery. But when he tried, he was forced to flee to the desert of Midian

where he made his way as a sheep farmer for 40 years. He had plenty of time for wandering and wondering and seeking this mysterious God.

And then one day God comes. Moses sees a fire in the desert, a bush engulfed in flame that just keeps burning and burning without being consumed. If you want to see a majestic portrayal of this, check out the movie *The Prince of Egypt*. Moses says, "I must turn aside and look at this great sight".

**Then the hidden God speaks from the fire.** He reveals himself to Moses, speaks his name and introduces himself as the God who appeared to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Moses discovers that God is there. He is not silent. He reveals himself to his people.

For Nicodemus the situation is very different. As a highly esteemed leader and teacher in Israel, **Nicodemus knows A LOT about God.** You can bet he's memorized most of the Old Testament and can tell you everything people knew about God back then. And yet God still seems hidden and elusive to Nicodemus.

He's been listening to Jesus teach...and some curiosity, some hunger, **some doubt or question stirs in his heart and compels him to seek out Jesus.** But he can't go like some young disciple asking a bunch of questions, so he approaches Jesus in a way that demonstrates his knowledge and judgment as a scholar and leader of Israel.

"We know that you are a teacher who has come from God...." **But Jesus is not impressed.** He retorts that contrary to what you may THINK you know and see, Nicodemus, "no one can SEE the kingdom of God without being born from above."

You see God is not as hidden and elusive as he seems. Jesus is saying that God's got plenty to show us but **the problem is in OUR perception.** So Nicodemus learns that people are spiritually blind and can't see the kingdom of God without the help of God. That makes it pretty clear doesn't it?

And Jesus describes the help God gives. He shows how the God Who is Hidden reveals himself in surprisingly simple ways. **God sends his Son and his Spirit to show us.** God the Son and God the Holy Spirit show us God the Father and help us know and love and serve him. Let's look at how that works.

The conversation with Nicodemus began with him displaying his limited knowledge of Jesus. It ends, however, with Jesus showing his true identity and mission. Jesus is not merely some great teacher, come to expand our understanding. He is the Son of Man who **descended from heaven to bear witness and tell the world** of heavenly realities, the true stuff...the *deep* stuff about God.

"God so loved the world that he sent his only Son," that he might be lifted up for all the world to see, "so that whoever believes in him might have eternal life." He

comes to save us from sin and death, from the grip of evil and foolishness and to bring us to God, to give the life of God to us, to give us eternal life.

**And so everyone is invited to look at Jesus...**to look and see and believe and be healed and made whole. That's how the hidden God reveals himself! He's given us Jesus on the cross, a very public demonstration for all the world to see.

But Jesus also describes God revealing himself in a more subtle way. He sends his Spirit to show us. Whereas Jesus' work is public, the work of the Spirit is more elusive. Jesus likens it to the blowing of the wind. If Jesus gives us something to look at, the Spirit that gives us eyes to see the reality that's there.

That what Nicodemus lacked. For all his religious involvement and education, he wasn't able to see the living reality of God standing in front of him, talking to him that summer night. To see and experience these things **a person must be "born of the Spirit."**

That's Jesus' way of describing the work of the Spirit in revealing God to us. The Spirit enters our life and breathes his life into us. That's what "inspire" means, "to blow in." **The result is a transformation so complete** that Jesus can only describe it as being born again, only this time we are born from above, bringing new life, new perception, new sight.

And Paul in our Epistle lesson from Romans 8 this morning would add a new identity and new relationship with God. He reasons that to be born of the Spirit of God is to be **born as a child of God**, to be heirs of God and to personally know and love God as Father. We are actually caught up into the love of the Trinity.

So as we grope to know and understand, to experience and serve God like Moses and Nicodemus, **he's not as elusive as he might seem.** God shows himself to us in his Son, publicly offered to the world, and we need to see him and believe and receive the life he offers us.

God shows himself to us in his Spirit who blows like the wind in our lives. We need to open ourselves to the wind, allowing God to breathe his new life into us and give us eyes to see him, and a new heart to love and serve him. That's how God is Building Christians for Service and that's what we are all about here at St Peter's.