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“The Trinity: Balm for Anxiety and Despair” The Rev. Aaron M. G. Zimmerman (6/4/2023, Trinity Sunday)

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Let us pray.

Almighty God made the words of my mouth and the meditations of all our hearts to be always acceptable in thy sight, oh Lord, our strength, and our Redeemer, amen.

They used to make pop songs about God.

The one that most recently comes close to it will be Drake's God's plan. But it is a genre that has been largely forgotten. But I would like to bring up an old classic from 1990, made popular and sung by none other than bet Midler. And the name of the song is from a distance. And this is when people thought it was good to put bad theology on the radio. And the song begins to talk about God watching us from the distance. That's what the chorus

says over and over from a distance. God is watching us, God is watching us from a distance. And I would like to say to that song, no hard paths. And one of the things to me that that song evokes is the reality of the ministry that Andrew and Cara and Al and I have the clergy and leaders of this church is often to undo bad theology.

There are people sitting in our offices or chatting after church or asking questions in Sunday school classes, and we often have to address Bette Midler is the only No, not her personally, and this isn't about her. And she didn't even write the song, she just sung it. But the idea, God is watching us from a distance conveys the two things that people often get wrong, I think about God, and one leads to anxiety and one leads to despair. So if you don't want those things, we'll see if we can help you a little bit today. So God is watching us. That's the anxiety part. It's like Santa Claus, he sees you when you're sleeping, he knows when you're awake. He's making list of who's bad and good, God is watching. God is watching. And this, as I said, leads to anxiety. Because if you know yourself at all, you know that you have a very poor track record of loving God with all your heart, soul, mind strength and loving your neighbor as yourself. You haven't even done a good job today. And it's Sunday. Now, I can't tell you exactly how. But I bet you haven't loved God perfectly today. And I bet you haven't loved your neighbor, to say nothing of the person you live with today.

So God is watching leads to anxiety and from a distance

that's despair. God is far away. God has checked out, God may be aware of what's going on in your life, he's ready to throw the hammer at you possibly, or to judge you or cast you into a fiery pit. But he's certainly not very concerned. He's just at a distance. God is watching from a distance. So between these two poles, this is where most people live. And like I said, I had somebody come to me once and they were telling me, Aaron, you you talk about God's grace all the time, and the fact that Jesus his work is finished, and we are forgiven. And yet I have 50 decades of hearing the opposite.

That I am not okay. And that God is angry with me all the time. And I better watch out. And it's just hard for me to get over that.

God is watching

from a distance.

So enter Trinity Sunday.

We put it all over you can see it ever. So this is how you know

the day of the church here. And this always comes the Sunday after Pentecost. So we've now collected all three persons of the Holy Trinity. God the Father, of course he's we've know about that. And then the son we learned about him at Christmas time and tracking with him for a while

we've completed the death and resurrection and ascension and then the Pentecost Sunday is when we learn about the coming of the Holy Spirit. So now that we have these three persons, we have Trinity Sunday, and I know you all are ready to celebrate you have the Trinity cake cooling on your granite countertop at home. You're getting ready to sing those Trinity songs around the Trinity tree. Play those Trinity games pin the tail on the Trinity

it's it's there's no Trinity cards at Target.

It's not a Sunday and if you are not someone who has been in the Episcopal church or a tradition similar to it, you've maybe never had at Trinity Sunday. And it's something that a lot of us get

it wrong. And I want to talk about why it's important to get it right why we have this thing in the church year.

If you want to get a full dose of Trinitarian theology, if when I say Trinity, you think I'm talking about a University in San Antonio,

you could turn to page 35 in your bulletin and read the Athanasian Creed, which is an ancient statement of faith about the Trinity. Why don't we do that right now,

just for the fun of it. So back of the bulletin, and let's just read a little bit. Now, it wouldn't be the practice.

Traditionally, to read the whole thing out loud, we're not

gonna do the whole thing. It's long as you can already see. But let's begin on that first page, page 34, where it says two lines down and the Catholic faith and let's read from the Catholic faith to the word co eternal about three

items there. And the Catholic faith is this, that we worship one God in Trinity, and Trinity in unity, neither confounding the persons nor dividing the substance, for there is one person of the Father, another of the Son, and another of the Holy Ghost. But the Godhead of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost is all one, the glory equal, the majesty co eternal.

Now, maybe that's how you felt, not how I felt, I was like, Yes, this is so great. I'm so excited to talk about the Trinity. Because like I said, people often get it wrong. And if you get it wrong, you are in Bette Midler territory of anxiety or despair. God is watching, you should be anxious, God is far away, you should despair. And what we begin to get at with the Trinity is something really good and beautiful. Most people, like I said, get it wrong. I know this, because of things I hear, for example, oftentimes, people come to talk to us about some crisis in their life. And they'll say, this is the bad thing that's happening to me. And I've come to talk to you because I believe in God and Jesus.

Outside, I am just very pastoral face,

very loving and caring and compassionate. But inside, I am dying a little bit. Because to say, I believe in God, and

Jesus implies something less than a Trinitarian understanding of God and means that I feel compassion for this beloved child of God, because they are either in anxiety or despair. It's sort of like when somebody says the word supposedly.

It is supposedly, some of the people say things like that, and it just sort of ah, and when people say God and Jesus, it's like, they're implying there's some big boss God.

And then there's the subsidiary regional manager, Jesus, the Holy Spirit doesn't even get a mention, apparently assistant to the regional manager.

So what is the Trinity I mean, you can begin to get an idea from what we just read, also the cover of your bulletin I took off usually what we have there, the St Albans shields and put on it this ancient drawing understanding of what the Trinity is, you can read from the upper left corner going around the father is not the son, the son is not the Holy Spirit, the Holy Spirit is not the father. But then if you read from the outside in the Father is God the Son is God. And the Holy Spirit is God.

You see how this is a little bit, mind bendy, a little bit hard to get

our hands around it. So what what is this good mystery of the Holy Trinity? And why is the guy in the pulpit so

animated about something that you never think about? Why am I so excited? And why do I want you so much to begin to move toward this greater Trinitarian understanding of God, this impossible thing?

Well, I want to say three things. And there are there's not enough time in the world or words in the dictionary to properly explain or understand God, I always tell people, if you can understand God, find a different church.

Because God is a mystery, and a Trinitarian understanding of God, that's a mystery as well. It's this paradox we're trying to hold together.

But there is some really good news in it and if you can move towards it. I think it is balm for anxiety and despair. Because to have a Trinitarian understanding of God

means that within the Godhead

Add, there is relationship. The Father loves the Son, the Son loves the spirit. The spirit looks at the Father and the Son and says, and I love you guys. There is relationship there is love within God, God is not this sort of solitary, unitary point, just this cold, divine intelligence. No, there is relationship within the Trinity. And that love is what spills out into all creation, which Bob Scattergood St. Albans own Morgan Freeman read

about the first 50% of the Bible this morning.

That long Genesis reading. And the reason that's the reading for Trinity Sunday is because it begins by saying in the beginning, God created the heavens in the earth, God the Father, the Spirit of the Lord hovered over the waters, the spirit. And God said, Let us make, so God speaks the word of God, Jesus Christ. So you even in that begin to have this Trinitarian understanding of God, and this relationship spilling out into all creation, which is good.

And so when you understand that there was relationship in God, when you pray, God,

you're addressing Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, these three beings in relation to three persons in relationship with love, you are addressing love, and that love pours out into your heart.

That's the love that God has for you.

And man, if that is not an antidote to despair, I don't know what is.

That Trinity also means

because if Jesus is God, and Jesus is fully God and fully human, it means that humanity is in the Godhead.

That's this great mystery that we had a few Sundays ago, ascension, when Jesus ascends bodily into heaven. He

doesn't disperse into some sort of smoky cloud, and disappear. He ascends bodily into heaven. And Jesus being God means that we have humanity in God the Godhead, this is another impossible thing, I can't even ask you to begin to understand it, because I can't even understand it myself. How is humanity in the Godhead? I don't know. But it is.

And what that means is good news for you. Because I don't know if you are aware, but you are a human and you have a body. And all of your problems are bodily problems.

You don't have enough money, that's a bodily problem, because you can't buy enough food or cool or heat your house or

operate your transportation. If you have a body it means you have pain, it means you have probably chronic pain, it means you have issues with your serotonin and dopamine levels, it means you probably have some issues as you age with the little coating of myelin that goes on the cells in your brain, it means that the the things that used to make your joints work don't work anymore, it means that you have trouble sleeping, it means that you see the doctor more and more these days. And it means that that little you used to have one bottle of pills in your

bathroom. And then it was a thing with days of the week, and it was small, little compartments, and now it's the size of a Buick.

Monday is like a cookie jar of pills. All of your problems are in some sense, bodily problems.

Because you are a body.

And the Trinity means that the human body of Jesus is in the Godhead, and God knows your human problems, and is repairing them not as someone who doesn't know what that's like, but as someone who very much is in that

your real human life

is part of God.

And finally, if the Spirit is God,

if God the Holy Spirit, is God.

And this is it, almost when I put it into words, it feels like not enough.

But it means

because many of us think the Holy Spirit is just like a fuzzy feeling about God, this sort of summer camp vibes.

The Holy Spirit

is God

and the Holy Spirit

dwells

in you.

And we dwell in him.

In this means so much it means that God is present with you. If I could add another thing to the things I don't like when people say about God, the one being God and Jesus. The other thing is when people talk about God being the man upstairs

Again pastoral Pokerface. Yes, man upstairs.

But again inside, oh,

because God's on a man. God is not upstairs, there's no stairs, not even escalator. And God is here with us. That's what the Holy Spirit means. And it means that the Holy Spirit is uniting you, together with all those, the communion of saints, those who've gone before, and those who will be head of us. Everybody here has lost someone. Everybody here has grief.

And the Holy Spirit is that person of the Godhead that binds us all together, even now,

with God, and with those who are also with us in God.

This whole sermon has been about an idea

that attempts to describe the reality of God. And I'm sure I have fallen short. I'm also sure that there's no way that I can flip a switch in you to make you believe the Trinity and then make that work everything out in your life. Many of you, maybe internally are sort of like this, I don't know about this trinity.

You may be like the disciples as they see Jesus in that reading from our Gospel today, they worship Him. But some of them doubt.

It's a very natural place to be with something as complicated and strange as what I've talked about today.

But whether you believe it or not,

or whether you understand it or not,

or whether after I sit down, you forget it. Until next Sunday, it doesn't change the fact

that within the Godhead, there was a relationship of three persons, who love each other infinitely. And that love spills out into infinite love for you.

And whether you believe it or not, or whether you

understand it or not, doesn't change the fact that your human life, human life is wrapped up in the Godhead. And God is very interested in those problems that you have.

And whether you believe it or not, or whether you understand it or not, it doesn't change the fact that God the Holy Spirit is with you even now.

And through the Holy Spirit, you're united with God, and with the family of God.

And you can rest in that.

So in one sense, I'm not asking you to do anything, but I'm inviting you to believe that as God is revealed as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit

is salvation, from anxiety, and despair, and an invitation to rest that God is more complicated and more beautiful than you could have ever imagined. And that God is for you, and with you, and in you.

Amen.