

A sermon for Trinity Sunday based on Psalm 8 and Matthew 28:16-20 preached at Knox Church Dunedin New Zealand by Kerry Enright on 7 June 2020

Prayer - Holy, holy, holy one, guide us by the Spirit of truth, to hear the Word of life you speak, to give all glory, honour and praise to your threefold name, in Christ we pray. Amen.

If we doubted that theology matters, we only need to think of the United States President standing outside St John's Episcopal Church across from the White House and holding up a Bible. Just prior, people had been protesting peacefully outside the church. Some of the people of the church including ministers had been offering water and other help to the protesters. All of them were pushed away from the church with tear gas and rubber bullets. In a heart-wrenching story, one of the priests described what happened. The bishop of the area stated how appalled she was. The Pentecostal preacher TD Jakes, named after his grandfather who was murdered by white supremacists, was interviewed in a Hillsong service. Each of them brought not opinions, not views that were right or left, not political allegiances, not Christian nationalism. They looked deeper and further. They brought to human experience theological reflection based on the Bible and in the light of history.

The black US preacher William Barber III has called for a new Pentecost because the language we use to describe what is happening isn't big enough. The language of left and right, of liberal and conservative, this language isn't big enough to address the deepest issues humanity faces. Sometimes it feels like we talk in echo chambers of the like-minded, where people repeat back our own views. As Barber says, we need something different. One of my theological professors used to say, theology matters. It makes a material difference to life. Theology matters, growing our capacity to speak from a gospel world, a gospel perspective.

As I said earlier, today is the one Sunday of the Christian year named after a doctrine, a doctrine aimed to invite us into a gospel world. It's Trinity Sunday, the Sunday on which we celebrate the God classically described as Father Son and Holy Spirit. It's not a theory to sit on the shelf. It's not a test of orthodoxy. It's not a perplexing conundrum. Let me use an image. When we lived in Sydney, we weren't far from Lane Cove National Park. A park that stretches

along a branch of the upper reaches of Sydney Harbour. It has many entrances and many different perspectives. In one part of the park you can walk among massive rocks and peeling bluegums as if you were far from a city, but then turn to see the outline of the CBD. Then in another part you can walk beside a river as the water dragons watched you pass or they scurry away, and you can see people canoeing. At another part, families have barbeques and there is a children's playground. People bike and walk and drive and kayak. One of the great features of Lane Cove is the diversity of ways of experiencing it, but never far from the water and often leading to it. Can we imagine the trinity as an invitation into the diverse life of God in the world. Can we reflect on the ways in which we receive and experience that invitation in our everyday lives?

Here are some of mine. When I wake in the night and walk outside to look up at the night sky – the lights shining in the darkness, the sense of greatness, the stretching majesty, my own insignificance. Wonder. Sometimes at the end of the day, there is gratitude so I go to sleep saying the words in my mind, thank you, thank you, thank you. Sometimes I am disappointed at what I have done or said, and I utter the words sorry and forgive, forgive, forgive. When I hear the story of George Floyd, I am silenced with sadness, the tragic ending of life, wondering what is it in our humanity that leads us to lean on a man's neck for nine minutes even after he stops moving. And I know this is not the first or last time this will happen. So I am taken into people's experiences, even if it is far from my own, and especially the experience of chronic injustice. When I see police not kneeling on necks, but kneeling in solidarity, leaders showing empathy, ordinary people bravely taking practical steps, I want to be part of that, that movement. But where does this inner urge come from.

I choose to see these and more as invitations into the life of God in our world, more than just me, more than an echo chamber, more than repeating what others say, more than my natural inclination to left or right, liberal or conservative. More than me, more than you, more than us. Our experiences of God in our world lead inexorably to the figure of Jesus, the human shape of God, God in our form, Christ. God as loving parent, God as Christ, God as Spirit, one God inviting us into the life of God in our world. Diverse experiences, three persons, one God, behind, beyond, beside, among. God invites us into God's diverse life of God in our world, that wondrous park, where we grow in wonder and sadness, in grief and anger, in love.

KNOX CHURCH, DUNEDIN

*Captivated by the vision of the realm of God,
made known in Jesus, given in grace*



Knox Church

449 George Street

Dunedin

New Zealand

www.knoxchurch.net

Kerry Enright: 027 467 5542, minister@knoxchurch.net