

Sermon Title: If God Is Trinity, What Are Godly People Like?

Scripture: John 16:12-15 (mentioning also the other readings, Rom 5, Prov 8, Ps 8)

Sermon Text:

Let me begin with a joke. Q: How many Christians does it take to change a light bulb? A: Three, but they're really one.

The three-ness of God - the doctrine of the Trinity - is not where we would choose to start when we explain the gospel to our friends. We might be embarrassed: we can't quite get our heads around it, so why should they? And it doesn't seem to imply a particular set of rules for living - so perhaps it's best left to theologians to worry about the detail. And if we do that, what about when we get to this day in the church calendar, Trinity Sunday?

[ONE]

The first point I want to make today is that **godly people respect truth**. Shying away from discussing or defending what God is like in himself is not a godly attitude, because godly people respect truth.

You can see this in John chapter 16. Jesus says, 'I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear.' Notice the implications of this - Jesus came to say things, and he has a lot to say - his desire is limited by the practical question, of how much information his disciples can remember in one hit. 'I have more to say than you can now carry' - the camel's back is loaded up, I'm going to have to leave this straw off. Jesus wants his disciples to know. If our god was Bacchus, then godly people would love wine. If our god were Neptune, then godly people would love surfing. What are godly people into?

Jesus wants them to know the truth - verse 13, 'But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth.' Jesus came to us, and sent the Spirit, so that we could be guided into all truth, so that we could know what is right, so that we could understand things correctly. Consider Proverbs 8: 'Doesn't wisdom call out? Doesn't understanding raise her voice?' Wisdom advertises, wisdom calls to us and points us to understanding. The world was created with wisdom, we're told there. And wisdom is delightful. So it is a good thing, to pursue knowledge and understanding. It is a good thing to want to know all truth. Godly people respect truth.

Godly people respect truth because of our place in the world. Psalm 8: O LORD, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth! You have set your glory above the heavens. ... 3 When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, 4 what is man that you are mindful of him, the son of man that you care for him? When we 'consider' the way that the world is fitted together - everything that we see in the heavens - when we seek to understand it, then we see God's place over the world - 'how majestic is your name in all the earth' - and we see our place in the world - 'what is man, that you are mindful of him?' In the same way, Wisdom spells out her authority in Proverbs 8: I was there when God made the world, she says. So listen to me. Wisdom is older than the hills, older even than the heavens, 'appointed from eternity'.

Godly people respect truth because we trust in God as the wise and truthful creator. We respect truth, we desire knowledge and wisdom, because God has told us that he made the world with wisdom. We trust that when we study the world, we are able to get to the truth of it. In our modern church, we tend to think that secular knowledge and spiritual truths are utterly disconnected. So of course no-one outside the church would 'get' the Trinity. We think there is a gulf between our church activity, ruled by the Bible, and our business principles, or our company policy, or our national laws. So it is only when one clearly goes against the other, at the last minute, that we suddenly find we should have been paying more attention at the start.

Australians think that God is concerned with our morals, but that our technology somehow involves no ethics. So we pragmatically choose a car or a television or use the internet, without pausing to thank God that our technology works at all, without pausing to consider how we are trusting God in this life, in this world. And if the technology starts to throw us great ethical dilemmas, we're caught off guard.

Our lives in this world should be marked by careful, prayerful, thankful concern for the truth. 1 Our lives should be marked by honesty and integrity. 2 And we ought to trust in God as our loving creator as we learn all things, thanking him and seeking to serve him when we learn and with what we learn. 3 Australians hate hypocrisy in the church - that ought not even to compare with how much we hate hypocrisy. 4 We ought to long for God's truth to be revealed to us by his Spirit as we read his word. Godly people respect truth.

[TWO]

But we know that knowing lots of things doesn't bring us any closer to God. We might worship wisdom - we might strive with all our might to study the workings of our world, we might attain to an encyclopedic scientific knowledge - but we'd still only know the first and best of his works. We'd be art critics who'd never met Pablo Picasso. We could understand only as much as he chose to reveal in his work. Knowing stuff doesn't get us to God.

The good news is that God is open-handed toward us. God sent his Son to reveal himself to us. God shows us who he is. The doctrine of the Trinity is not an arrogant formulation that says, 'we've discovered what God is like'. It is a humble recognition - this man is God, come to us, speaking and living among us to show us himself in all his glory. More than that, the doctrine of the Trinity preserves our recognition that God is open-hearted toward us. He does not tell us who he is, he shows us, and he does it so that we can relate to him. We can only truly understand and worship God if we worship him in trinity, because the shape of God, if you like, determines the shape that our worship has to take. The Spirit glorifies the Son to us. The Son reveals the Father to us. So my second point is that, because God is Trinity, **godly people are those who trust the Lord Jesus Christ.**

We believe that when Jesus Christ revealed himself to us on earth, he was God. 'All that belongs to the Father is mine,' and the Spirit of Truth, who comes from the Father, glorifies Jesus Christ. He was not the first of God's works, as wisdom is described, he was the worker. He is not some supercreature - he is not a creature but the Son of the Creator. He has taken on human nature. We believe that the Spirit Christ sends is the Spirit who comes from the Father (see John 14:15, 14:26, 15:26): we believe that the Spirit who has come into our hearts is God.

Romans 5 says 'Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand'. 'Access by faith': because we trust Jesus Christ, we have access to the Father's grace. We are at peace with God. And (verse 2) 'we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God,' which, verse 5 says, 'hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us'. God has filled our hearts with his love, by his Spirit. God is tremendously open-hearted towards us. We worship God in Trinity - Son, Spirit, and Father.

The godly people of a trinitarian God are those who trust in God's Son as our saviour and our Lord. Godly people have 'all truth' only through him. It is the Son who reveals the Father, it is the Spirit who glorifies the Son. So by the Spirit, through the Son - in that shape, by that route, we worship God. You know when they say that God is a mountain top, and the different 'faiths' are just different ways to the top? Well, God is a Trinity-shaped mountain. There is a Son who can take you up the mountain - or you will fall. There is a Spirit who can make you fit to reach that height, majestic over all the earth - or you will freeze, or black out. There is a Son. There is a Spirit. God is a Trinity-shaped mountain: if you try another way, you will die.

We worship God as three-in-one because we can - because there is no other way to worship God. Worshipping God as Trinity is what it means to trust Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ will bring you to his Father by the working of his Spirit. That's the Christian faith - it is what Christians trust in. It is a trinitarian faith. Jesus Christ will bring you to his Father by the working of his Spirit. The implication of this for our lives is fairly simple, really - trust Jesus Christ. Godly people trust our Lord Jesus Christ.

[THREE]

Godly people respect the truth. Godly people trust our Lord Jesus Christ. Thirdly, **godly people speak with Christ's authority, and they give glory to him.**

John 16:13 says that the Spirit of truth will not speak on his own. Jesus says here that the Spirit speaks whatever he hears - he takes from what is Christ's and gives it to us. The Holy Spirit, then, speaks with Christ's authority, and gives glory to him. John 16:14: 'He will bring glory to me by taking from what is mine and making it known to you.' So if the Spirit has come to you, if the Spirit of truth will guide you into all truth, then whose authority will you speak with? Your own authority?

Verse 15: 'All that the Father has is mine' - everything is the Father's, and it all belongs to the Son. And the Spirit speaks only what he hears - he takes from what is Christ's. But here again is the astonishing open-handedness, open-heartedness, of God. God gives us his Spirit. 'All that belongs to the Father is mine'... [But] 'the Spirit will take from what is mine and make it known to you.'

The Holy Spirit speaks with Christ's authority, and gives glory to him - and this tells us that we, too, are to give glory to the Lord, Jesus Christ. As we receive the Spirit - as we are guided into God's truth - so we speak with Christ's authority.

When you speak to people, who do they hear? Do they hear your opinion, or God's opinion? Now, think carefully about this, brothers and sisters. I do not feel adequate to this. I do not think I have begun to spend enough time in the Scriptures to think that I should speak God's opinion. How could I speak with Christ's authority? How could I? How could I know enough? How could I be worthy? Do you see the scandal of God's grace, that he should open his heart to me - to you? To us? I cannot be worthy, I cannot know enough, I cannot speak. Do you feel the awesome responsibility, of our being now the sons of God - of seeking to give glory to God, of seeking all truth, being guided by the Spirit of Truth?

We have been given a room in the house. A share of the meals. A seat at the table. The keys to the good car. Equal right to hit Dad up for money, or to ask his advice, or to run to him and tell him everything. We've been named in the will. But how often do you live, as I know I do, as a lodger in God's house? Oh, I worship one God alright - but do I trust in his Son to have made me worthy? Or do I try to pay room and board? Do I long for his Spirit to grow me into the family likeness, do I spend long periods talking to my Father? Or do I pop in once a week or so, to press the flesh and show my face, but keep my old name on my licence, even as I borrow the car? Do I plunge into the truth, do I hunger for the word of God, do I look around at all the world my Father has made, and learn about it with childlike wonder and delight? Or do I mind my own business, get out and do my own thing, value my privacy before God, get by? Do I seek to pay tribute to my older brother all the time, or am I trying to make a name for myself?

Brothers and sisters, I don't like these questions because I know the answers. I know what value God has placed on my adoption. I know what it cost him, and I know what attention I give it. I know what it cost God to make us godly. Now, what value will our godliness have? Will we be salt and light in this world? Will we do good as we speak in it? Or will we be just another pack of humans serving ourselves? Will we show Christ as we live in it? Or will we expose ourselves?