

# FINDING THE TRINITY

Trinity Sunday, 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2016

Sung Eucharist

Holy Trinity, Lamorbey

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Although now well integrated with Greater London, Lamorbey is a place with interesting historical associations. Indeed the earliest house still extant here, at number 27, Halfway Lane goes back as far as 1452. But if someone (rather like me) was arriving here for the first time and in advance asked you where Lamorbey is, where would you point them? Would it be to Lamorbey House and Rose Bruford College? Would it be to Thomas Dinwiddy's impressive clock-water tower surviving from the Hollies? Would it be the surviving oast houses – or indeed would it be here – Holy Trinity Church?

Each would presumably have its own claim, but none of them is Lamorbey. It's rather like the American tourist in Oxford. She is taken by her guide to Balliol College, then to Christ Church, then to New College – after that she sees the Sheldonian Theatre, the Clarendon Building and the Bodleian Library. 'Yes', says our transatlantic friend, 'this is all very interesting, but where is the university?' Well, of course, they've missed the point. Or to use the terms philosophers would use, they've made a *category mistake*. They've asked the wrong question. It is all of these things that make the university. So too it is with Lamorbey.

Now this is no bad place to start on this day of the year, Trinity Sunday. For often it's a feast riven with confusion. Where shall we find the Trinity? Where might we look for an answer? Well classically we might be directed to an unusual document called the Athanasian Creed. It used to be de rigeur to recite it on certain days in the year. It sets out classically for the Church of God a very clear statement of the Trinity. Let's look at a wee snippet as the Scots might say:

‘The Catholic Faith is this: That we worship one God in Trinity, and Trinity in Unity ...neither confounding the Persons, nor dividing the substance. . . Such as the Father is, such is the Son: and such is the Holy Ghost...The Father incomprehensible, the Son incomprehensible: and the Holy Ghost incomprehensible... As also there are not three incomprehensibles, nor three uncreated: but one uncreated, and one incomprehensible. . .?’

Well, there we are – now that’s *clear* . . . but I doubt whether it is. My guess is we are all standing staring at one complete incomprehensible! Over the centuries, many models have been offered to help us understand the Trinity. Augustine of Hippo and re-imagined by the crime writer Dorothy Sayers used the three concepts of memory, understanding and will. More crudely others saw God as akin to water – ice, liquid and steam, but still the same substance. Still more laboured was the analogy of a father who was also one’s schoolteacher and scout master. But none of these really capture it terribly well. Either the models are too crude, or they’re too conceptual. So where might we find the Trinity?

Let's glance for a moment at our three readings, for here we see three different writers in the Scriptures seeking after God. So, there was that beautiful piece from the book of Proverbs:

'Does not wisdom call, and does not understanding raise her voice?' Then comes a reply: 'The Lord created me at the beginning of his work. . . long ages past I was established at the beginning of the earth ...when he established the heavens, I was there. . when he marked out the foundations of the earth, then I was beside him like a master worker. . . rejoicing in his inhabited world and delighting in the whole of humankind.'

This poetic piece has the writer searching the heavens and the earth. There is the Lord God creating all things – and there is the *Wisdom* of God with the Father from the beginning. Then we heard from Paul:

‘Since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. . . and we boast in our hope of sharing the glory of God. . . and hope does not disappoint us because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us.’



Here, again in lyrical words, the register has broadened further. Our faith in God the father has made us right, justified us, made us just in God through our Lord Jesus Christ – that same Jesus who walked this earth. So too God's love has been poured into our redeemed hearts made righteous by the Holy Spirit given to us

Then there's Jesus himself speaking in the Gospel of John:

'The spirit of truth will some guiding you into all truth. He will glorify me, because he will take what is mine – all that the Father *has* is mine.'

Once again there's an extraordinary weaving together of our experiences and knowledge of God. God is working in our hearts and minds, in Jesus he comes to us and redeems us and we receive him in this sacrament – his Spirit powers us in all we do. Nothing is possible without God.

So, returning to our beginning – here we’re not seeking Lamorbey or the University of Oxford, but the same issue prevails. *Finding the Trinity* is itself a mystery with God revealed in three quite different patterns and yet all the same God. Proverbs describes it beautifully with the Wisdom or Spirit of God, there from the beginning with the Creator, the Master Builder. So too in Christ. *Finding the Trinity* is both an elusive journey of discovery yet one where God is with us in Trinity, around us, within us - in Christ, in the Father-Creator and in the Spirit. So, don’t ask *where the Trinity* is – we’re living within God in all these ways as God rejoices in his inhabited world and delights all humankind. Amen

### Readings

Proverbs. 8. 1-4, 22-31.

Romans. 5. 1-5.

John. 16. 12-18.