

John 3:1-17

Jesus teaches Nicodemus that, in order to see God's Reign, he must be born of the Spirit. For whoever believes in Jesus, sent by God into the world to save the world, receives God's eternal life.

Now there was a Pharisee named Nicodemus, a leader of the Jews. He came to Jesus by night and said to him, "Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God; for no one can do these signs that you do apart from the presence of God."

Jesus answered him, "Very truly, I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above."

Nicodemus said to him, "How can anyone be born after having grown old? Can one enter a second time into the mother's womb and be born?"

Jesus answered, "Very truly, I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit. What is born of the flesh is flesh, and what is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not be astonished that I said to you, 'You must be born from above.' The wind blows where it chooses, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit."

Nicodemus said to him, "How can these things be?"

Jesus answered him, "Are you a teacher of Israel, and yet you do not understand these things? "Very truly, I tell you, we speak of what we know and testify to what we have seen; yet you do not receive our testimony. If I have told you about earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you about heavenly things? No one has ascended into heaven except the one who descended from heaven, the Son of Man. And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life. "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life. "Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.

COCU40B.Trinity Sunday

Trinity Sunday is the only week in the year when the focus of our worship is a doctrine. This year, though, the readings move the Trinitarian theme beyond the realm of purely intellectual fascination, into a very practical response to the radical transformation that comes from an encounter with this Triune God.

Isaiah's vision, with the triple "holy" of the seraphs, reveals how powerfully transforming a true encounter with the triune God can be. The Psalm supports this with its celebration of God as king over all, including the heavenly beings. In Paul's letter to the Romans, he reveals how the triune God works in our hearts and lives to make us, both in identity and action, true Spirit-led children of God. Finally, in John's Gospel, Jesus makes the same point in his call for seekers of God to be born again – transformed, by God's Spirit, into believers in, and practitioners, of the values and purposes of God's Reign, that was revealed, taught and demonstrated by Jesus. God invites us to be participants in God's work in the world, by giving us an example, and by opening doors to God's life through his death and resurrection. The empowerment we need to enter this relationship with God, and live as kingdom people, is God's Spirit who is given to us and through whom we are born from above. The key for this week, then, is how God encounters us, and transforms us into Christ-like, kingdom living, children of God. The Trinitarian focus reveals how God works in us, and in our world, in so many different ways – as transcendent Monarch over creation, as friend and co-worker for justice in human affairs, and as personal and corporate empowerer and transformer. God is at work throughout the universe, and in the smallest details of our lives. God is at work in us as individuals and as communities. God is at work in us to transform everything, from how we live to the systems within which we live. There is the challenge for us to encounter this Triune God and be moved into action as a result. We are called to be personally changed – convicted, confessing and cleansed, like Isaiah, so that we are born from above – and to become those who bring the transforming influence of God's Reign into the world, not just living ourselves for justice, peace and love, but, like Isaiah, being sent to bring those qualities into the world. The challenge, then, of this week's celebration is to recognise that changing our world requires a recognition of God's activity at every level of our world, but also a commitment to being changed both personally and socially. *(Source: John van de Laar, Sacredise)*

Isaiah 6:1-18

Isaiah receives a vision of God in God's glory in the Temple, and he hears the seraphim singing "Holy, Holy, Holy." Then, after he has confessed and been cleansed, he hears God asking for someone whom God can send, and he volunteers.

In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lofty; and the hem of his robe filled the temple. Seraphs were in attendance above him; each had six wings: with two they covered their faces, and with two they covered their feet, and with two they flew. And one called to another and said: "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory." The pivots on the thresholds shook at the voices of those who called, and the house filled with smoke.

And I said: "Woe is me! I am lost, for I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips; yet my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts!" Then one of the seraphs flew to me, holding a live coal that had been taken from the altar with a pair of tongs. The seraph touched my mouth with it and said: "Now that this has touched your lips, your guilt has departed and your sin is blotted out." Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" And I said, "Here am I; send me!"

Psalms 29

A psalm in praise of God's glory, the power and majesty of God's voice, and acknowledging God as the eternal ruler over creation, the heavenly beings and all people.

Ascribe to the Lord, O heavenly beings,
ascribe to the Lord glory and strength.

Ascribe to the Lord the glory of his name;
worship the Lord in holy splendour.

The voice of the Lord is over the waters;
the God of glory thunders, the Lord, over mighty waters.

**The voice of the Lord is powerful;
the voice of the Lord is full of majesty.**

The voice of the Lord breaks the cedars;
the Lord breaks the cedars of Lebanon.

He makes Lebanon skip like a calf, and Sirion like a young wild ox.

The voice of the Lord flashes forth flames of fire.

The voice of the Lord shakes the wilderness;
the Lord shakes the wilderness of Kadesh.

**The voice of the Lord causes the oaks to whirl,
and strips the forest bare;
and in his temple all say, "Glory!"**

The Lord sits enthroned over the flood;
the Lord sits enthroned as king forever.

**May the Lord give strength to his people!
May the Lord bless his people with peace!**

Romans 8:12-17

By the power of God's Spirit, we are heirs with Christ of God's glory, we are adopted as children of God, and we are able to live according to the Spirit's leading, not following our sinful nature.

Brothers and sisters, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh - for if you live according to the flesh, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God. For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received a spirit of adoption. When we cry, "Abba! Father!" it is that very Spirit bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ - if, in fact, we suffer with him so that we may also be glorified with him.

Paul contrasts two ways of living, and two outcomes. To live according to the flesh means to live for that which is transient, pursuing self-interests at the expense of others, and ignoring the presence of God. This ends in death - not physical death, but a dying of the self as God intends one to be. A spiritual death. But Paul is confident that the believer can put to death those deeds of the body that are sinful "by the Spirit." The consequence of this way of living is life (8:13, "you will live"). The metaphor refers to life that is truly life, the life that God intends for God's own, a life led by the Spirit. It is also a life that has an ethical significance. Paul says elsewhere: "If we live by the Spirit, let us also be guided by the Spirit" (Galatians 5:25). Believers have a new relationship with God - as children of God who address God by the familial term Abba (meaning Daddy). Paul asserts believers are joint heirs with Christ only "if we suffer with him". More than likely, he means that suffering arises out of one's loyalty to Christ.