

**Sermon:** Do we love the idea of God or do we love God?

**Reading:** Genesis 1:1- 31  
Matthew 28: 16-20

### **Introduction.**

Today this sermon focusses on two great themes and doctrines of the Church. One is the Holy Trinity and the other is the mission of the church which we discover in the last words of Jesus in Matthew's Gospel to the disciples.

To begin with the most challenging - the Holy Trinity. Skeptics will say, the word Holy Trinity doesn't appear in the Scriptures! They are right of course, the word 'Trinity' doesn't appear in the Scriptures but that doesn't mean the concept isn't there. Let me explain...

From the very first book of Scripture (Genesis), we are introduced to God who is the creator of heaven and earth. As we read we discover something interesting in the first chapter. Did you notice anything interesting in verse 26? It says, 'Then God said, 'Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness...' (**Genesis 1:26**). Did you spot the plural word 'us' and the word 'our' as God speaks about making mankind in His image? Who is God speaking to when He says, 'let us?' He's obviously speaking to someone! Some think God was speaking to the angels which sounds plausible until we do a Scriptural search and discover, nowhere in the Scriptures are angelic beings ever referred to as being created in the image of God. Mankind is the only created beings made in the age of God. So we need to rule out the angelic beings. This is intriguing! God is speaking to someone as He uses the plural words 'Us' and 'Our'. Some hypothesise there was more than one God! This is a heresy called Polytheism which clearly goes against the Scriptures which we also need to reject outright! There are many passages where God says there are no other gods but Him. See Isaiah 45 which says three times, 'I am the LORD, and there is no other; there is no God besides me'.

Another interesting fact is the title given of God in Hebrew is Elohim. The word Elohim is plural! So the opening statement of Genesis reads, In the beginning Elohim (God's) created..... ' This would ordinarily be bad grammar, The word El is the proper grammatical word or singular use, so some assume a copyists error, a mistake when writing Genesis? Although this sounds plausible, it's unlikely as we discover this error occurs some 2500 times throughout the Scriptures. A copyist may make one mistake, possibly two but not 2500 times! So here is the paradox, the Scriptures speak of God as One but refer to Him grammatically in the plural! This is a paradox (*Paradox definition - a seemingly absurd or contradictory statement or proposition which when investigated may prove to be well founded or true*). God is One in essence and yet revealed in three Persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The word Trinity is used to hold this paradoxical theological concept together. All the word trinity means is Tri = (three) and Unity = (together/one).

So what examples do we have of this in Scripture? Our reading today offers a good example of the Three in One as Jesus tells the disciples to baptise new believers in the name's of God the Father, The Son and The Holy Spirit. How does the Holy Spirit fit into the Godhead? Remember the Holy Spirit was already mentioned in Genesis account which says, 'The Spirit was hovering over the face of the deep!' (**Gen 1:2**)

In the beginning the Father created and the Holy Spirit was there, but what about Jesus, was He also there? Take a look at John's gospel and notice how he begins his gospel it mirrors Genesis saying, "In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and

the Word was God' (**Jn 1:1**). So how do you know the Word was Jesus? That's a great question, read John 1:14, the Word became flesh and dwelt amongst us. This is the great Incarnation we celebrate on 25th December. So yes the father, Son and Holy Spirit were all there at the beginning of creation and before anything.

Skeptics however argue, nowhere does Jesus ever say, "I am God worship me." This is true, that exact phrase isn't written in Scripture, but it doesn't mean Jesus isn't God! Consider these passages and see for yourselves. Peter speaking about Jesus, says this, 'For we did not follow cleverly devised stories when we told you about the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ in power, but we were eyewitnesses of his **majesty**' (**2 Peter 1:16**).

**Paul** writing to the Christians in Colossi said of Jesus, 'The Son is the image of the invisible God...'(**Col 1:15**). Jesus is the exact likeness/image of God. Exact in all ways which makes Him God from God, light from light, true God from True God of One being with the Father (**Nicene Creed**). Jesus is the exact essence as God the Father as is the Holy Spirit. They are exact essence which makes them One but different persons which makes One and Three.

**John** says, 'That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched, this we proclaim concerning the Word of life. The life appeared; we have seen it and testify to it, and we proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and has appeared to us. We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ' (**1 John 1:1-3**).

Need any further proof, then consider this prayer from Jesus when he says, 'And now, Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began. (**John 17:5**). And of course when Philip said to Jesus, 'Show us the Father and that will be enough for us', And Jesus replied, "Don't you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'? (**John 14:9**). Jesus goes on to explain that He and the Father are One.

The Holy Trinity is an unfathomable mystery, our comprehension of this is limited. We dwell in the physical realm and only understand what we can see and experience within the dimensions of the realm we inhabit. We must remember there is also the spiritual realm which we do not have sight of (yet) where God dwells. If I were able explain God in a neat package which grasps the fulness of His Deity in His completeness, without any misunderstanding, then the God I describe would not be the God of creation who governs the universe. Think about it how can a finite mind as ours ever describe the great mystery of God? If I'm honest I can't fathom my wife never mind the creator of everything in the universe!

Charles Wesley famously penned.....

'Tis mystery all! The Immortal dies!  
Who can explore His strange design?  
In vain the firstborn seraph tries  
To sound the depths of love Divine!  
'Tis mercy all! let earth adore,  
Let angel minds inquire no more.  
'Tis mercy all! let earth adore,  
Let angel minds inquire no more.

Its fair to say I don't understand many things just like I don't understand electricity or gravity, I know they exist, I'm happy they do, but I don't need to jump off a building to prove gravity or put my fingers in a plug socket to appreciate electric. I don't understand them but realise they impact my life in a very real way, but I'm happy in the mystery.

### **Why does God need us to share the Gospel?**

Moving on to the second part of the sermon, have you ever wondered why Jesus gave us the task of the Great Commission? Wouldn't you prefer God who is all powerful to find a different way of getting the message out to all then world which would be more effective such as, Write it on the skies,

Put His mark/ stamp on the whole of creation (i.e made by God!)

Shout it from the heavens Himself

Surely these would be a more effective? Would it surprise you to know God already has!

### **Written on the Skies....**

Writing it in the skies, surely this would persuade those who chose to dismiss God! The Psalmist writes, 'The heavens declare (proclaim) the glory of God, the skies proclaim the work of His hands. Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they reveal knowledge. They have no speech, they use no words; no sound is heard from them, yet their voice goes out into all the earth, their words to the ends of the world...' (**Psalm 19:1-4**).

### **Put a stamp on creation....**

Paul in the letter to Romans writes this,

"For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities - his eternal power and divine nature - have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse' (**Romans 1:20**).

Paul is reminding the Christians of Rome the whole of creation is a witness to God. Behind everything we see there was a design, from the clothes we wear, the chair we are sitting in. Behind the design of creation is a designer, with immense intelligence, the world is so wonderfully complex and governed by laws of science there has to be a designer who thought about it and create it.

### **Shout it from the heavens.....**

When God spoke from the Mountain to Moses, the people trembled in fear and cried out for God to no longer speak to them but do so through a spokesman Moses, for they were too scared to listen. When we read in the New Testament God speaks a number of times and those who heard the voice trembled in fear, but others doubted and said, it only thundered, (see John 12:9).

Many people today still dismiss God believing everything in creation just evolved over billions of years, from prebiotic soup to gloop and hey presto complex life. They claim there is no God, it was all a cosmic accident, a big bang or was it thunder!!! If the complexity of life, the design and beauty of creation don't persuade mankind of God's existence what is left for God to do other than to reveal Himself within His creation.

Paul saying of Jesus, "The Son is the image of the invisible God...for in Him all things were created...' (**Col 1:15**). If we want to see God, look to Jesus. What else does God have to do to show us His existence and His love? Will the world be convinced if He sheds His blood for us, exchanging His life for ours? Maybe then the world will be convinced! What do you think?

## **Our Commission**

If those around us are not convinced by the evidence of creation maybe they will be convinced by the witness of those who follow of Jesus! One of the greatest and most powerful displays of God's power and love is in the life of a believer whose life has been touched and transformed by God. A living testimony to God's saving grace, power to transform, redeem, sanctify and to save the lost. John Newton wrote, 'Amazing grace, how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me.'

Our role as Christians in the Great Commission is give others an opportunity to see with their eyes something extraordinary and provide them with the directions they need to turn from darkness to the light so they also may be saved. We don't save anyone, this is the work of the Holy Trinity who saves. The Father draws them, the Holy Spirit convicts the soul of sin and as we introduce them to the Saviour, it is Jesus who saves and redeems.

Do you understand the great privilege God is providing His people with? We all would like to leave our mark in this world to tell the world after us that we were once here. We can carve our name in a tree or build a sky scraper but sooner or later our names will be lost. But the work God invites us into is a work will last an eternity - the saving of a soul. I'm sure the angels long for this commission, but God invites us to do it alongside Him. It's an amazing opportunity to work with Him in the redemptive work for which the true Church is tasked to perform. This is our purpose as His Church and this work is given to no other. There is no other organisation which speaks the words of life in truth, other than the Church of Jesus Christ. St. Paul points out, "How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them?" (**Romans 10:4**). This work is eternal, not temporary, it's a great way to know you lived in this world by winning souls for Jesus for that lasts eternally.

When someone knows they are lost, the Holy Spirit is working in their hearts and the Father is drawing them closer to His saving grace. We can lead people to the Saviour but the question of their salvation as well as ours comes down to one simple act - are we prepared to humble ourselves through repentance, turning back to God and accept His grace knowing that there is nothing we can do to save ourselves, nothing I can do to earn or merit my own salvation, it is purely the work of God. It's a gift, I either accept His grace or reject it. If the response is, 'Im not ready for that' - well that person is still lost!

## **Summary**

Many love the idea of God, the idea of life everlasting and a heavenly kingdom but don't particularly want to engage much with the work of God. Do we worship God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, the One true God as described and revealed in Scripture or have we created a god in our image and likeness. One that likes what I like and agrees with my lifestyle? We demonstrate our commitment and love for God through submitting our life in obedience to His Word, following His commands. One of these commands is the Great Commission. The title of this sermon, 'Do I love the idea of God or do I love God?' The answer is revealed in how we respond to the Great Commission. Even the thief on the cross confessed Jesus as Lord before he died! Have we ever confessed Jesus as my Lord, Do we obey His commands and support the work of the Church, the evangelists, teachers, preachers and missionaries who proclaim Jesus is the way of salvation leading others to a saviours grace? Jesus said to Peter, 'Do you love me?' Peter was asked three times by Jesus and Peter was hurt at the third time of asking. Jesus asks us the same question, may our response be as Peters, Lord you know I love you. **Amen**