

**Rev. Mike Cole**  
**Providence Presbyterian Church**  
**Trinity Sunday**  
**June 15, 2025**  
**Romans 5:1-5; John 16:12-15**

**"What Difference Does the Trinity Make?"**

As most of you know, our church follows the liturgical calendar, which marks six major seasons of the year - Advent, Christmas, Epiphany, Lent, Easter and Pentecost. The second Sunday in the season of Pentecost, or what has become known as "Ordinary Time" is designated as Trinity Sunday. It's easy to get into the anticipation of the Advent season, the joy of the Christmas season, the penitence of the Lenten season and the exuberant hope of the Easter season. But let's be honest.

Trinity Sunday doesn't exactly excite us, does it? Trinity Sunday just doesn't do much for us. It lacks "pizazz," partly because we think of the Trinity only as a theological concept. In the year 325, at the Council of Nicea, the church decided on a definitive concept of God called the trinity. The leaders of the church had observed that throughout scripture, God related to His people in three separate and distinct ways - as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. This assertion led them to conclude that God is three separate and distinct persons, but is one God. Further, the Council went on to affirm that Jesus Christ was fully human and fully divine. That is, they stated unequivocally that Jesus Christ is God.

There was significant opposition to this affirmation by a church leader named, Arius, who believed that Christ was a human being with wonderful qualities, but was not an integral part of the divine nature of God. Arius believed that Jesus was fully man but not fully God. Arianism has been rejected by the church ever since, declaring that Jesus is BOTH fully God and fully human. The Council of Nicea voted to adopt the doctrine of the trinity as a foundational principle of Christianity. It has stood the test of time for 1,700 years, and continues to be a primary way of distinguishing Christianity from all other religions and cults.

But, so what? So, what does all this mean for you and me? What difference does the trinity make to our lives? Even though we have turned the trinity into a theological concept, it is not just some nebulous theory. It reflects the reality of how God chooses to relate to us.

Some folks have the notion that God is very distant and removed from us - that God sits way off in heaven observing us and our world with a kind of disinterested curiosity. But the reality is that God isn't way out there - God is here - all around us and within us. God is present in our past, our present and our future. The Lord is keenly interested in us and what happens with us. From the very beginning, God has gotten down on our level to guide, direct, correct and nurture us.

Through the centuries, dozens of analogies have been offered to help people understand the trinity. Here's another one. When I was a boy, I knew Ed Cole as my father. He was there to train me in the ways of being a man. He taught me to hunt and fish and enjoy the outdoors. He disciplined me when I did wrong.

When I was 8 living in a new subdivision in Houston, I frequented a Texaco gas station with my friends. Milt, the owner, was a nice guy and always welcomed us to hang out. He had a coke machine and candy, bubble gum and peanuts, which was the Trinity of treats for me and my pals. One day on a dare, I stole a piece of bubble gum. Milt hadn't noticed and I was the envy of my friends for a little while. But that evening when my Dad got home from work, he sat me down and asked if I had anything to tell him.

Kids, that's a parental ploy when they already know the answer to their own question. I fessed up to my thievery and awaited my execution. But Dad had a punishment far worse than execution. He drove me up to the Texaco and made me apologize and pay Milt for the stolen bubble gum.

I was no longer the envy of my friends. Word got around fast and I felt the icy stares of the other parents in my neighborhood. I had gone from being popular to being a pariah. I definitely learned my lesson that day. My Dad taught me about life, sometimes by positive example and sometimes by negative example. There was never any doubt in my mind about his role as father in my life or my feelings toward him - I both loved and feared him.

My relationship with my father was complicated, like so many parental relationships. I respected him, feared him and even pitied him. I respected him for all the knowledge he imparted and the skills he taught me. I feared him when he got angry, which was fairly often, especially when we worked on projects together. I pitied him for what alcoholism did to him.

Thus, Father's Day is a mixed bag for me personally, and perhaps for some of you, too. The way I have reconciled myself to celebrating Father's Day is to think more of my heavenly father than my earthly father and to give thanks for all the ways my Father in heaven provides for me.

I was about four years old when I went to my first family reunion - at least that's the first one I remember. I recall being surprised when I met my grandfather for the first time

and realized that my father was somebody's son. At first, it puzzled my young mind how my father could also be a son, and yet the evidence was right there - my father was a son. Not only that, but I also met my uncle and my aunt, which meant that my father was somebody's brother - he was a father to me, a son to my grandfather and a brother to my uncle and my aunt, but he was only one person. It all seemed very confusing, and yet it was undeniably true. Once I accepted the reality of it, I began to develop a new appreciation for my father who was a son and a brother.

Even though this analogy has all sorts of flaws, because it is based on the physical world when God exists in and beyond the physical world, I do believe it hints at the reality of who God is and how God is related to us. Through the Old Testament, we see God relating to humanity as a Father, sometimes guiding, sometimes chastising, sometimes nurturing, sometimes teaching, and always loving the people back to His ways.

In Jesus Christ, we witness God relating to us as the Son, as one who lived with us, worked with us, played with us, laughed with us, cried with us and died and rose for us. Following Jesus' ascension into heaven, we perceive God relating to us as Holy Spirit, Comforter, Counselor, and Companion. God never stopped being a Father to us when Jesus, the Son, came to live among us or when the Holy Spirit came upon the disciples at Pentecost. All three aspects of God have always been present from before the beginning of time and will always be present.

But there are times in history and in our lives when one aspect is more noticeably at work. Now that we have some historical and theological background and have attempted an analogy to comprehend the reality of the trinity, we're back to my original question - what difference does the trinity make in our lives?

In all three of these ways that God chooses to relate to us, He is NOT distant and far off. He is near at hand, at the ready, steadying us with a solid shoulder to lean upon, dabbing away tears from our eyes, encouraging us in difficult times, propping us up when we are too weak to stand on our own, guiding our footsteps when we have lost our way, correcting us when we do wrong, applauding us when we do right, comforting us when we are troubled, stirring us to action when we are complacent, and urging us to serve others when we would much rather be served.

God is our Father/Mother, our brother and our friend who never, never, never leaves our side. God is not some impersonal, far-removed entity, who set the universe and motion and then simply watches it spin on its own. God is intimately involved in all of creation, including, and most especially our lives.

The difference the trinity makes in our lives is the difference between a dispassionate God and a God who is passionately involved in our world and our lives; it is the difference between a God who is removed from us and a God who seeks to remove obstacles for us; it is the difference between a God who is incommunicado and a God who longs to commune with us; it is the difference between a God who keeps us at a distance and a God who draws us nearer and nearer; it is the difference between a God who keeps us at arm's length and a God who wraps Holy arms around us; it is the difference between a God who couldn't care less about us and a God who couldn't care more.

That's the difference the trinity makes - all the difference in the world - all the difference in our faith.

In the name of the Father..... and of the Son..... and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

**The Charge: Wherever you go, God is sending you. Wherever you are, God will equip you. God will accomplish a purpose in your being there. Christ who dwells within you has something He wants to do through you where you are. Believe this and go in God's grace, love and power. Amen**