

SERMON: Circle of Love
TEXT: John 16:12-15

6-12-22

Star Trek, the original series, was one of my favorite TV shows growing up. I wouldn't go so far as to call myself a "trekkie" but I have also enjoyed the Star Trek movies. I love the characters: Captain Kirk, Mr. Spock, Dr. McCoy (also known as Bones), and Scottie. And I love all the great, quotable lines. Bones: "Darn it, Jim, I'm a doctor, not a miracle worker." Scottie: "I'm giving it all she's got, Captain!" Captain Kirk: "Beam us up, Scottie." And of course, we mustn't forget Spock's signature blessing, "Live long and prosper."

Perhaps the most memorable quote, for me anyway, came from the movie, *The Wrath of Khan*. The climax of the movie has Mr. Spock sacrificing himself in order to save the Starship Enterprise and its crew. His dying words were spoken to Captain Kirk in answer to his question, "Why?" In a raspy, labored voice,

Spock explained, "The needs of the many outweigh the needs of the one."

Spock dies in order that others might live. Certainly you recognize the parallel. We call ourselves Christian, because of Christ, who died that we might live.

But too often I'm afraid that we see Christ's sacrifice as one that was made for each one of us as individuals. Some churches will ask the question, "Are you saved?" Or an individual will point to the exact day on which they were saved. This only serves to emphasize salvation as a personal matter. But I believe that Jesus' emphasis was more on the community than on the individual. The whole world was saved by the event of Jesus' death and resurrection.

I see this emphasis in particular, in today's reading from the Gospel of John. Three times in just six verses, Jesus indicates that one of his goals is *that they may all be one*. This is part of a farewell prayer for his disciples that Jesus prays before his arrest and crucifixion. "I ask not only on behalf of these, but also on behalf of those who will believe in me through your word, that they may all be one.... The glory that you have given me I have given them, so that they may be one, as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may become completely one."

There's an old song about "one" being the "loneliest number." It's about the loneliness of not having a "significant other," or an intimate partner beside you. But Jesus is talking about one *community*.

I think we've surpassed it now, but it wasn't long ago that we were living in the era known as the Me Generation. The Me Generation (also called the Entitlement Generation) has been

defined as anyone born after 1970. An article in Time Magazine dubbed those born after 1980 the Me-Me-Me Generation.

According to the experts, the primary characteristics that describe these generations are narcissism and a sense of entitlement. But Jesus calls us to put the needs of the many above the needs of the individual.

And the Trinity is about relationship. But God, of course, is the picture of perfection. As confusing as the Trinity can be, God is perfectly complete and perfectly balanced within. God as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is an on-going, inseparable, mutual, equal relationship. The three persons do not represent different functions, as we often describe them. It is not just the Father that creates, but the One God. It is not just the Son that redeems, but the One God. It is not just the Spirit that sustains, but the One God. The Father didn't come first, then the Son, then the Spirit, but all were there at the beginning, and all will be there at the end. Before the creation, there was God: Creator,

Christ, and Holy Spirit, all in relationship together, vital and co-existing in the heart of God. Before the creation, before there existed any object for God's love, God was love. Perfectly satisfied and perfectly complete love within the Trinity.

God doesn't need us to be complete. But the good news - the amazing grace - is that God chooses us. One article I read stated, "What kind of God... chooses to be in relationship with those who are broken and unfaithful? The God whose very being is eternally rooted in relationship. The God whose divine, unbroken communion and unity as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit reaches out to us in love, calling us back into communion again and again. Though we are human and therefore broken before God, the eternal One reaches out, sticks with us, and calls us back into relationship. In God's constant faithfulness to us, the triune God models how we, too, are to reach out to and stick with broken people and communities, initiating opportunities for communion again and again." (Kimberly L. Clayton, *Preaching Trinity Sunday, Worshiping the Triune God, Call to Worship, Vol. 53.3*)

All for one and one for all. This was the motto of the Three Musketeers, because they were fully committed to one another. If one of them was in battle, the others would join the fight. If one was about to lose his life, the others would risk their own lives to save him. Each of them existed for the good of the trio, and only death could separate them.

“All for one and one for all” expresses the highest level of commitment. Yet it still falls short when it is used to describe the Trinity. Ever since the beginning of Christianity, theologians have been seeking an adequate way to explain how God is three persons. Countless volumes have been written on the subject. But finally, we must admit that there are some questions that can never be answered. In the end, “mystery” is the best answer we have.

The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit cannot be separated, nor added to. You might say that the Father is the “mind,” the Son is

the “body,” and the Holy Spirit is, of course, the “spirit.”

Everything God ever needed is right there within Godself.

Since I repeat them often, I know you remember the two greatest commandments, as given by Jesus? “To love the Lord our God with all our heart, with all our soul, and with all our mind, and to love our neighbor *as ourselves*.”

I heard someone once say, “Rhetoric doesn’t change people, relationship does.”

We are made in the image of God, which makes us relational beings. The more we can see ourselves as complete with the love that God has poured into each of our hearts, the more we can fulfill - with the help of the Holy Spirit - Christ’s commandment to love one another.

If you're feeling alone today, know that you are drawn in to the CIRCLE OF LOVE that is the Trinity. Let the overflowing love of God - the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit - fill the void and make you complete. Or if you're feeling divided and pulled in too many different directions, let the overflowing love of God - the Creator, Christ, and Holy Ghost - be the anchor that is your center and your foundation. There is more than enough love with God to overflow to us, and more than enough to continue flowing from us to others.

In a few moments, we will be invited to the *communion table*, the place where we receive the body and blood of Christ and become the one Body of Christ - the church. All are invited. All belong.

Let us live this truth, to the glory of God!

AMEN.