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| **The Lessons Appointed for Use on the** | http://www.lectionarypage.net/Art/Newshield.gif |
| First Sunday after Pentecost: Trinity Sunday |
| Year B RCL |

Isaiah 6:1-8

Romans 8:12-17

John 3:1-17

Psalm 29

*or* Canticle 13 (or Canticle 2)

**The Collect**

Almighty and everlasting God, you have given to us your servants grace, by the confession of a true faith, to acknowledge the glory of the eternal Trinity, and in the power of your divine Majesty to worship the Unity: Keep us steadfast in this faith and worship, and bring us at last to see you in your one and eternal glory, O Father; who with the Son and the Holy Spirit live and reign, one God, for ever and ever.*Amen.*

**Old Testament**

**Isaiah 6:1-8**

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!”

**The Response**

**Psalm 29**

***Afferte Domino***

1 Ascribe to the Lord, you gods, \*  
ascribe to the Lord glory and strength.

2 Ascribe to the Lord the glory due his Name; \*  
worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness.

3 The voice of the Lord is upon the waters;  
the God of glory thunders; \*  
the Lord is upon the mighty waters.

4 The voice of the Lord is a powerful voice; \*  
the voice of the Lord is a voice of splendor.

5 The voice of the Lord breaks the cedar trees; \*  
the Lord breaks the cedars of Lebanon;

6 He makes Lebanon skip like a calf, \*  
and Mount Hermon like a young wild ox.

7 The voice of the Lord splits the flames of fire;  
the voice of the Lord shakes the wilderness; \*  
the Lord shakes the wilderness of Kadesh.

8 The voice of the Lord makes the oak trees writhe \*  
and strips the forests bare.

9 And in the temple of the Lord \*  
all are crying, "Glory!"

10 The Lord sits enthroned above the flood; \*  
the Lord sits enthroned as King for evermore.

11 The Lord shall give strength to his people; \*  
the Lord shall give his people the blessing of peace.

***or***

**Canticle 13**

**A Song of Praise   *Benedictus es, Domine***

***Song of the Three Young Men,* 29-34**

Glory to you, Lord God of our fathers; \*  
you are worthy of praise; glory to you.

Glory to you for the radiance of your holy Name; \*  
we will praise you and highly exalt you for ever.

Glory to you in the splendor of your temple; \*  
on the throne of your majesty, glory to you.

Glory to you, seated between the Cherubim; \*  
we will praise you and highly exalt you for ever.

Glory to you, beholding the depths; \*  
in the high vault of heaven, glory to you.

Glory to you, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; \*  
we will praise you and highly exalt you for ever.

**The Epistle**

**Romans 8:12-17**

So then, 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.

**The Gospel**

**John 3:1-17**

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.

I speak to you in the name of One Triune God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

If you have not read your bulletin today, or the hymn board, today is Trinity Sunday. This day has the distinction of being the only Sunday in the liturgical calendar that has the theme of the Sunday NOT a teaching or life event of Jesus, but instead a doctrine of the church. It is not just any doctrine, either, but for many it is the most challenging doctrine of all and one that is just plain difficult to wrap one’s head around. Many a new priest or seminarian is chided… “oh, you *have* to preach on Trinity Sunday.” I think the chiding is really okay. It acknowledges that even those who have studied and continue to study do not make sense of the mystical; or that since we all, including priests, live *in* the world, that any sense of the mystical that IS made does not always stick. All that said, my only hope for today is to give you a gift. Christ and the Holy Spirit are gifts from the Father, so we can perhaps think of this as re-gifting. I don’t think the Triune God would mind.

The most important thing about the Trinity to remember is that the word truly means three/ tri held together in one. The key is the oneness. Jesus never set out to start a different religion than Judaism. Yet, it is not as if the Christ started with the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem. The Gospel of John tells us that the Word was with God in the beginning. God is one. The Spirit moved over the deep in Genesis, God is one.

Along this notion of “God is one” is the support that we get from scripture on this point. It needs to be stated that the Trinity, as such, as an entity, is not actually mentioned in the Bible. There are a couple of passing glances where we see all three persons of the Trinity present, such as Luke’s description of Jesus’s baptism, but this theological concept or construct is just not part of scripture. Where it does really show up is in the formulation of the Nicene Creed. This does not mean it is not holy or important, but I actually think it helps with our own recongition of the oneness of God to be okay with how it is present in scripture and how it isn’t.

In terms of helping us with thoughts about the Trinity, I think one of the greatest thinkers was Augustine. When he wasn’t writing about the theological concept of “original sin,” he was extremely helpful;… so please don’t hold that against him. Augustine likened the Trinity to God as Lover, Christ as the Beloved and the Holy Spirit as Love whirling among them as the wind. The only problem I have with this is that as sure as you have that penned down, it seems to change. Which one was Beloved again? Who was Love? and perhaps that might just be the point. It matters not. Perhaps it keeps us from thinking too much about how the Trinity is like forms of water: ice, water or vapor. What does matter is that the Trinity is inherently relational within itself, relational in love and therefore relational to and with us.

Bishop Curry’s Royal Wedding sermon was evangelical at its best, because it spoke this Gospel truth. God is love. When you are loved, the world does indeed change. If we find a way to harnass the power of love, we, well God really, will reinvent fire. The world will truly be a different place.

And so that brings me to the gift. The gift I want to give you is the following. Wherever you are on your faith journey, know that you are loved. God is in relation with you, whether you know it or not. Therefore, go in your heart to where you know God. For each of us, at different points in life, it will be different. That is okay. Jesus came into the world to show us what God is like. God is self-sacrificing. You may feel God more in the wonderment of nature, in the power of natural events, or in the still small voice. You may know Jesus in the words of scripture. You may know the kindness of strangers as the manifestation of the Spirit. or the hairs on the back of your neck as you enact love to the other. Go to where you know God, where you experience the holy. Most of us don’t have experiences like Isaiah’s, but maybe you do. Go there.

And what if you aren’t sure you know God right now? That’s okay too. Go in your heart to where you have known God before, chances are God is still there. God wants that relationship with you, I will hold that belief for you if you can’t right now, but then make yourself available with any familiarity you have. God as love wants you to know love.

This is what is meant by being born again or being born from above. being born again/ from above. It is a new way of being. It’s not that Nicomdemus was stupid either. The Greek word means either “again” or “from above,” so you see the source of confusion for Nicodemus. Jesus spells this out that being born from above is living in love— it is being in relationship with God

And even the cross is relational: I offer the words of Mike McHargue. “The cross was not God’s invention- it was ours. In all our need for an eye for an eye, I have to wonder sometimes if God listened to us cry for blood and offered his own- if Jesus’ sacrifice on the cross was not to sate God’s wrath, but to show God’s response to ours.”

And it is clear, God’s response is pure love, lifted high on the cross as an action, self-giving love, not sentimental love.

And what is our response? Our response is to praise God in all that we are and do. We will have some understanding of the Trinity, we are in God’s image after all, but we are to call others into that community of love, to not just welcome others, but to be the community of believers, mirroring the divine community, and loving God as one divine community of love.