

Whom shall I send?

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Trinity Sunday is one of those Sundays all preachers dread. Not only are the bible readings the same every year, but the subject matter is so complex. Henry the assistant rector at Hickory Neck suggested that I give you all a scorecard and see how many heresies you could detect in my sermon. That however is the exact problem. That a mystery like the Trinity could ever adequately be described in human terms is in many ways absurd. We are trying to describe God in human terms and no matter how hard we try we will fail. Even Jesus had to resort to analogies and metaphors in speaking of God and the kingdom. He really never did mention the Trinity. In fact in this morning's reading from SSJE Br. Robert said the following: **Quiet**

“The Trinity is useful as a way of keeping us silent before the mystery of God. It is the insight that God is beyond all thought that lies behind our doctrine of the Trinity.”

With that in mind, I want to pick up on a point that I made two weeks ago when I was speaking about Richard Rohr's teaching in a video we watched on Wednesday night. As I was reading the commentaries many spoke of the complexity of the Trinity and the difficulty that the church has always had in explaining the mystery of what the Trinity is. Richard makes the point that we spend too much time on the what, what is the Trinity, what does it mean, look like etc and miss the how the Trinity connects us to God. In fact he said, “We could eliminate the Trinity from our vocabulary and 90% of what we do would not change.” At this point he then said, now don't go calling your bishop, I didn't say I didn't believe in the Trinity but that spending large amounts of time on explaining it does not for the most part change how we live as Christians.

Arguing about what the Trinity is, really is not the point. What we do in response to our experience of God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit is the point. This for me is where our reading of the call of Isaiah becomes an important text for today.

Now Isaiah certainly has a vision that is very clear. Unfortunately most of us will never have a message quite this clear. Well at least not something that we perceived as that clear. This makes it easier for many to say, well that was Isaiah and I'm not Isaiah. I don't have that kind of special relationship with God. Well yes we all do or at least we can, but we need to be open. However that is usually the first way we dodge a call from God. We claim we are not special, but God knows differently.

The next dodge of the issue is the attitude of I'm not worthy, not good enough, I'm too much of a sinner. Remember that Isaiah objects to the call saying he has unclean lips. Nobody is exactly sure what that means, but it is a way of saying I am not worthy, ready or able to serve. The angel however takes care of that objection by touching his lips with

a hot coal and proclaiming that he is now clean and ready to speak. Many of us hearing this can identify with this and surely understand the feeling of unworthy or inadequate.

I often hear the objection I do not know enough to talk about my faith with someone else. To be honest most people do not want a scholarly answer when they ask about God. I think they want to hear about how you experience and understand God. Granted that can be a challenging conversation. However this is where the old saying God does not call the equipped, but equips the called is proven true once again. None of us is really ready to witness, to share God's love. This passage once again promises us that if we go, God will go with us. God will put the words in our mouths. God will support our efforts. And our efforts to share God with the world are needed now more than ever before.

A blog written by Ben Irwin proposed 6 ways to save the church. Here is number 4 on his list and it applies to today's readings.

“But let's be honest for a moment: We've forgotten how to tell the story of Jesus. We've become too passive and complacent. The Great Commission does not say, “Wait for people to come into your buildings, then make disciples of them.” It says “Go.” Or as Episcopal Resurrection put it, “We can no longer wait inside our sanctuaries to welcome those who want to become Episcopalian.”¹

Episcopal Resurrection is a document that has been prepared for General Convention this summer as a call to revitalize the Episcopal Church. This document has been prepared and many of my fellow clergy including myself have signed on. This is a call to action. Action that cannot wait for us to think we are ready. So how do we go about this task of witness.

First of all we have to get over the fear of the word witness and that stereotype we all have of it. You know what I mean. To quote Bishop Curry once again, we all know those Saturday mornings. You are sitting outside on a nice summer morning. You can smell the fresh cut grass and you are just sitting down with a cup of coffee and maybe the morning paper when you see them. Two people with Watchtower pamphlets and you sneak back in the house and pretend that nobody is home.

I'm not asking you to go door to door, to be honest it is never very effective. However there are other ways to witness. Remember the famous line from St. Francis that says, preach the gospel at all times use words only if necessary. In today's world that is the most effective witness we can have. I learned just the other day that when Francis was organizing his order the pope told him he needed a rule of life. So Francis sent him the statement that the Rule of Life for Friars Minor is simply to live the Gospel. Think about your witness as living the gospel. Dana touched on this last week that we are called to witness. We are all called to witness through our lives what a gospel life looks like. This

¹ <http://benirwin.me/2015/05/21/6-ways-mainline-churches-should-respond-to-decline/>

is far more effective than what we often think of when we hear the word witness. I want to challenge you this Sunday to take time this week to ask God, how can I witness, how can I live into the call of every baptized Christian to be a witness to the gospel. This is not something new, I talk about this quite frequently and our service is based on this.

I use the post communion prayer on 366 for a reason. Part of that reason is the statement about witness that is contained in that prayer. I use the Franciscan Blessing for a reason. Dana sends you out into the world with her dismissal for a reason. God however you understand God does not expect us to hear his word and then do nothing.

Too much of the church is focused on accumulating points in the good book and getting into heaven. We make church into a private affair not a corporate one That is one of the places where I believe we are missing the boat. This is not about you, but about the world. And my friends this is a world that desperately needs some witnesses of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. This is a world that needs witnesses that look something like the teachings of Jesus Christ. So my friends the question is still, whom shall I send. I pray that you too can answer, " Here am I, send me!"