

“Are Three Persons Enough?” by Daniel H. Kuhn, Jr. 01050522
Genesis 1:1-5, 2:1-4a and Matthew 28:16-20
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“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,” said Jesus according to Matthew.¹ It is called his great commission to us and is as important as his command to love one another. It is a commission to immerse others into the faith in a God revealed by Jesus Christ. Teach them what God is like.

And what is God like? Nowhere else does that phrase, “father, son, and holy spirit” appear in the Bible. Why is it here? Matthew was trying to describe the fullness of God in this phrase which he puts into Jesus’ mouth. In this foundation of Trinitarian theology, Matthew is saying that God is more than just a father. God is more than that which we see in Jesus, the son. And God is more than the spirit which infuses and empowers those who believe.

What is God like? How do you picture God? What of God, as the psalmist says, with great wings under which we hide?² “Or God’s grace like a large lap into which we crawl,³ a breast upon which we lean? Or God a warrior calling us out to fight? Or God as Jesus sitting in the back pew of your church?” -- so writes Ann Belford Ulanov⁴

Will the real God please stand up! According to scripture, God is the Creator, fashioning a universe the way a child molds play dough into dishes and dolls and cars, and feeling good about it. Yet, God is also the destroyer, wreaking watery havoc over the globe, killing almost all of humanity and zoology and burying them in a watery grave. According to scripture, God is the lawgiver, ordering and organizing humanity through a series of “you shalls” and “you shall nots.” Yet, God is also lawless, allowing Job, his faithful worshiper, to be virtually destroyed, so Job is rightly able to question God’s moral authority.

In his Pulitzer prize winning book, *God, a Biography*,⁵ Jack Miles describes God as developing as humanity develops its religious thinking. He took Hebrew scriptures in their order of composition from law, through prophets to the writings (the “Tanakh”). As a result, he describes God saying, God is not immutable, although God is constant. God is changeable, although God is permanent. God is not distant, but God has feelings and reacts to the actions of human beings. Together, God and humanity grow into a love relationship, where, as human beings understand better the nature of God, they actually join in God’s creating and redeeming work.

Will the real God stand up! What of this messiah, this Jesus, this son of God? The savior that Jesus represents is difficult to believe in. He is so unlike the powerful and almighty God you have heard about. This Jesus says that we win— by losing. Whereas today’s gang members learn to prove that they are tough, and mean because toughness is everything, this Jesus says love is everything. Carlo Carretto has written that believing in the sort of Messiah that Jesus represents is to believe that power is a great danger, that wealth is slavery, and that the comfortable life is a misfortune.” Because it is so difficult to believe in the Messiah that Jesus represents, some

¹Matthew 28:19

²Psalms 57:1, Psalm 63:7

³Isaiah 66:13

⁴*Diary of Prayer for all God’s People*, © the Upper Room, p. 171

⁵*God, a Biography* by Jack Miles © 1995, A. A. Knopf

people say, ‘If there were a God, there would not be all this suffering.’ ‘Two thousand years have passed,’ says Carretto, ‘and there are still Christians whose doctrinal notions belong to those ancient days when the power and existence of God was revealed by displays of strength and the victories of armies, and by wealth, and having more possessions.’

This Jesus represents a different sort of God, one who gives his life so others may live. One who forgives his enemies. And so God is found out to be different than we had expected.

The way we imagine or picture God affects the way we relate to God. This Sunday, called Trinity Sunday, is an opportunity to consider the fullness of God– to open our minds to the vastness and wonder of God. Do not be dismayed when you hear God described as Mother or Father. Allow people to picture God in the way that is most helpful or most real to them. After all, aren’t they made in God’s image? Do not try to limit God to one picture. God is many things and everything. And *you* are made in God’s image.

Our picture of God can evoke fear, comfort, compassion, forgiveness, love, and judgement. Yet, God is bigger than our pictures and our feelings. That is what the concept of Trinity, God in three persons, is meant to express to us. Just when you thought you had God all comfortably pictured, God breaks out of the mold and says, ‘No, you can’t box me in. I’m bigger than that.’

Jesus told us to baptize in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Baptize in the fullness of God, not just in our little picture of God. In other words, let God be God.

‘And remember,’ Jesus said, ‘I am with you always, to the end of the age.’ Our God is present all around us. Our God is not distant and aloof. God is within you, like the air you breathe. God enters you like the oxygen which in your lungs exchanges into your blood and flows throughout your body, nourishing you, and giving you strength to endure, so you can teach what Jesus commanded: live by love.

Teach others about this God whom you love and who loves you. Teach others that we cannot pin God down to a throne on a distant cloud, nor picture God as a sadistic spectator who delights in human pain and misery. Teach others that the God whom you love and who loves you is a God who hurts when we hurt, a God who strengthens when we are weary, a God who is always with us.

‘And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.’