

I shall make all things well; and you shall see for yourself that all manner of things shall be well.

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

We come together today in this church to celebrate the festival of Trinity Sunday, having just recently celebrated the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, and the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead at Easter. Perhaps the challenge for us today is to find a way to mark this festival in a way that brings together all those elements of the divine that we've explored in these recent months. Thinking about the Trinity needn't be overly complex or frightening. Traditionally sermons on Trinity Sunday begin with the preacher telling everyone how hard it is to understand the Trinity; which is a champion way to turn everyone off your message. It's also tradition to give preaching duty on this day of the church's year to the young curate or ministry student. In the absence of a curate in this parish, it falls me as the resident theology student to have a crack.

If you want a clear, concise, workable and understandable definition of the Trinity, **don't** ask a theologian. Theologians have, over many years, tied themselves in ever more complicated knots in an attempt to describe and define God in three persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Artists and theologians have worked together to try to make it easier to understand the Trinity by making paintings and other works, and we explored some of them in a seminar at the St James' Institute last year. It was a perfect opportunity to play together an enjoyable round of Heresy Bingo. Since, alas, despite many good efforts, too often artworks of the Trinity have tended to emphasise one aspect of the Trinity while ignoring or even negating another. I think perhaps the problem has been we've attempted to describe the Trinity as a thing, rather than as relation. The celebrated artwork of the Trinity by the Russian Iconographer Andrei Rublev is one of the most successful and popular – why? because it's about relation. It's Trinity as a way to understand our relationship with God and with one another, and how the divine is woven into our human existence. The icon depicts three angels visiting Abraham at the Oak of Mamre, a story we find in Genesis 18. We're told there that the Lord came to Abraham, who then entertains these three men with a feast of grain, meat, and dairy – all the very best that he can find to share. Somewhere in the midst of it all, he realises that he's in the presence of God. Rather like the disciples on the Emmaus road who recognise the risen Jesus in the breaking of the bread.

At the time of the painting, in the 15<sup>th</sup> century, the Holy Trinity was the embodiment of spiritual unity, peace, harmony, mutual love and humility. These themes are found in our readings today, but also in the writings of Mother Julian of Norwich, about the Trinity as relationship, and I'd like to use that as the basis for this sermon today. Mother Julian was a theologian who understood the Trinity as relationship.

Mother Julian is remembered for many things, but most especially her vision, her message from God. She recalled that the Lord told her; "I may make all things well; I can make all things well, and I will make all things well, and I shall make all things well; and you shall see for yourself that all manner of things shall be well."

What are we to make of that vision – and how does it relate to Trinity Sunday? In her writings Mother Julian unpacks the vision. She writes...

*When he says "I may," I understand it to mean the Father; and as he says "I can," I understand the Son; and where he says "I will," I understand the Holy Spirit; and where he says "I shall," I understand the unity of the Trinity, three Persons and one truth; and where he says "You shall see for yourself," I understand the union of all human kind that shall be saved into the blessed Trinity.*

*And in these five words God wills that we be enclosed in rest and peace; so shall the thirst of Christ's spirit be quenched; for this is his spiritual thirst – the love- longing that lasts and will ever last till we see that sight on Doomsday. For we that shall be saved and shall be Christ's joy and his bliss, some are still here, some are yet to come, and so some shall be alive on that very day. This then is his thirst, a love-longing to have us all together and whole in him to be his bliss, this is what I see. For now we are not fully whole in him as we shall be then.*

Echoes there for me of a passage we explored together a few months ago, in 1 Corinthians, 'now I know only in part, then I will know fully, even as I have been fully known.'

This knowledge that we're referring to is divine wisdom, which we're told in the book of Proverbs this morning has been there since before the dawn of creation. The Psalmist is almost overwhelmed as he attempts to take it all in – the wonder of creation and the might of God, that God might be capable of all that, and yet still mindful of us. "What are we, that you should be mindful of us: what are we, that you should care for us?"

But God is not just concerned with the enormous things of the created order, God **is** concerned with even the littlest and humblest of things.

Mother Julian writes,

*God wishes us to know that not only does he take heed of noble things and the greatest, but he also attends to little and small, to low and simple, as much to one as to the other. This is his meaning when he said, "**All** manner of things shall be well"; for he wants us to know that the least thing will not be forgotten....*

That can be hard to fathom when life throws trouble our way, where is God **then** in our suffering and sadness? **Does** the suffering and sadness mean that we have been forgotten? Certainly not, indeed St Paul in his Letter to the Romans acknowledges that we have sufferings, which test us yes, but also produce endurance, character and even hope – and all this is possible because at the heart of it all we have peace with God.

In the midst of the struggles of life though, hope is hard to come by, and it's difficult to accept Paul's words that suffering, endurance and character produce hope – sometimes it just wears us out. But Paul is taking the long view, as Mother Julian does when she writes:

*The working of **our** reason **here** and **now** is so blind, so low and simple that we **cannot** know the high, marvellous wisdom, the might and goodness of the blessed Trinity. This is his*

*meaning when he says, “You shall see for **yourself** that all manner of things shall be well,” as if he had said, “Take heed **now** in faith and trust, and at the last end you will see it truly in the fullness of joy.*

I think we live in a world that’s in desperate need of hope and joy, actually. We are finding that we cannot in the long run rely on our own for hope; those institutions that we humans have ourselves set up, or our wealth or our health for that matter, these things can fail, and when we’ve invested all our hope in **them**, we feel utterly dejected. Sometimes it’s even hard to hope in ourselves. Yet, God dwells there in each of us, and if we’ve smothered Him with our naïve confidence that we can do without Him, perhaps it’s time to return in humility and discover again the hope of God that dwells deep within us, as Paul says, found deep in our hearts through the Holy Spirit. Hope that the work of the Lord is still ongoing, it isn’t ancient history, there’s much more of God’s work to come.

And so for Mother Julian in those few words: “I shall make all things well,” she understands a great comfort in all the works of the Lord that are yet to come.

And I think this is what Jesus means when he says to the disciples in our Gospel this morning that there’s still much to know, but we cannot bear it now. The Holy Spirit will continue to guide us into divine truth, if only we might listen and be guided.

And so we are invited to approach God with our cares, concerns, worries, anxieties. We bring them as we come forward to share in the sacrament, and we might leave the burdens there at the Altar rail. As we approach the Altar, we do so knowing that like Rublev’s icon, there is a place at the table prepared for us. We are invited into relationship with the Trinity, a relationship that brings deep and abiding peace, even in the midst of turmoil. Perhaps today we we hear God speak to us those same words of divine truth that he spoke to Mother Julian.

I dedicate this sermon today to the memory of my dear friend Ruth McCance lost in the mountains of the Himalayas; who always drew out the best in everyone she encountered, and shared with us God’s peace which dwelled within her. I pray that Ruth might rest in the eternal and nearer presence of God and, blessed with divine wisdom, that she might see for herself that all manner of things shall be well.