

Trinity Sunday, 3rd June 2012

Isaiah 6:1-8 A Vision of God in the Temple

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!’

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.

John 3:1-17 Nicodemus Visits Jesus

Now 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.

Trinity Sunday! If you've come expecting a mathematical treatise on The Trinity, or expositions of the excellent metaphors using shamrocks, Mars Bars or even trifle – then I'm afraid you'll be disappointed this morning!

Perhaps Tertullian addled our brains when he tried to summarise God in the word Trinity! Yet the nature of God is one of the most exciting joys of our spiritual explorations. Who *is* this God we worship? This God who draws close to us? And allows us – in fact, *desires* us – to draw close to him.

Many people believe in God – the God out there who is creator, powerful distant, the judge of what we do –the God who will hopefully not be too harsh when He meets us as the end of our lives. And maybe if we ask nicely He might even do something for us now in this life.

Is this the God of today's Bible readings? Is this the God we describe in the word Trinity?

Well, some fits with what Isaiah describes – the amazing description of God's power and glory, the angels proclaiming his glory, the quaking of the temple in His presence.

Not surprisingly, Isaiah thinks he's done for! "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!" And so he would be, if that's where it ended. . . . Then he describes God's response to his fear.

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!'

Hear these astounding words, pointing forward to Jesus' work on the cross: 'Now that this has touched your lips, your guilt has departed and your sin is blotted out.'

When the love of God touches us, we hear these words, personal words for each of us-

'Your guilt

has departed

and your sin

is blotted out.'

And that draws out Isaiah's response – joyful, willing, and wholehearted: "Here am I, send me!" What a change worked by the touch of God in this man who had been quaking in fear! And now – he responds in love and obedience!

It's God's work we are called to do, and it's when we see God's glory and realise that we have nothing of ourselves to offer, that His glory will actually be seen in us. All of us!

Meister Eckhart, a wonderful medieval man with many insights for our relationship with God, said, "We cannot imagine how much God desires each one of us." That is so much the basis of our Christian faith – and yet such a journey for each to begin to grasp this.

God gives himself fully to express His deep, loving and wonderful desire for each one of us:-

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.

Or, as Paul says to the Romans, when we can say, "Abba, father," the simple, homely, Aramaic word for the father-child relationship of intimacy, love and trust, we do so because the Holy Spirit deep within spilling out within our spirit is declaring to us that we are children of God!

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.

Part of that suffering is putting to death what Paul calls "the deeds of the body" – the desires and actions that take us away from God, selfishly seeking what we want instead of the deeper and eternal desires of God. Yet even that comes from God pouring himself out to us.

Her Majesty the Queen, prior to her coronation, felt deeply the weighty burden of serving the people of the United Kingdom as Sovereign and monarch. Yet that burden left her at the anointing with oil during her coronation, symbolising God pouring out His Spirit on her to fulfil the role and tasks to which she'd been called. That overwhelming weight has never returned. I'm sure there will have been times she's wrestled with aspects and duties of her calling, but her faith in God's calling to her has been her strength. God with her, giving Himself, enabling her. Her duty and her joy to respond.

A humbler illustration, yet still one that expresses the life led by the Spirit, blown unpredictably we don't know how or where, joyful, felt and yet intangible.

Someone came into St Peter's to enjoy the peace and stillness. We chatted and they asked for prayer. In a quiet corner we prayed for their need then asked for God's blessing through His delight in them as a child of God who gives life. We asked for God's forgiveness and healing that comes through Jesus' death on the cross – something we all need – and we asked for the love of the Holy Spirit to lead them into the wholeness that come from God in Christ. All this sealed with anointing with oil, a symbol of God giving himself to us, Father Son and Holy Spirit.

Then we sat in the stillness of God's presence. And as we sat, not rushing the moment, God's peace came and wrapped us both in God's love; fears and tensions were released, the lines on our faces were smoothed, and smiles came spontaneously as we both separately felt and responded to God's love – that mystery we can't imagine, the mystery of how much God desires each one of us. And this person and I, as we shared the stillness of God's presence, both felt the gentle, transforming power of His love. God giving Himself. The peace of God that passes understanding.

This is the mystery of the Trinity. That God gives Himself, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, to each of **us!** And **so much** desires to draw each of us into that fellowship already shared – Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

A mystery, knowable and yet always a mystery.

In the words of a song by Ian White,

Let us bow before the mystery of God,
Let us listen for he calls us each by name,
Let us rest here in a climate of compassion, and let his healing – let
His healing begin.