

Isaiah 40:12-17,27-end

Matthew 28:16-20

Introduction

My family don't get together as a whole family very often, at most two or three times a year but when we do I really enjoy catching up with the different generations. We usually have a good time and it is good to see my mother, brother and sister and nieces and nephew. What is interesting about these occasions is that I always find myself relating in several different ways: as daughter, sister and aunt.

When we all met at Christmas I had a discussion with my mother about the hard week she'd had and an appointment to check her hearing aids. We made plans for an outing later we were planning and talked about some work she wants done on her house.

My brother and sister teased me – as they always do and my brother recalled various embarrassing incidents from the past. We then swapped notes about our various work and retirement activities.

With my nieces and nephew we talked about parties, holidays, their work and training opportunities and their plans for the future.

In all these exchanges I was essentially the same person. Same nature, personality and sense of humour – yet I found that I was relating to them in different ways. With my mother our role now is one of equality but there is a sense in which I care for her – she comes to me for advice now, for support in managing her life and I worry about her health. With my brother and sister we are very much equals yet there is that sibling rivalry and shared experience that enables teasing and ridicule as a sign of affection. With my nephew and nieces, although they are no longer young children there is still that relationship of aunt to child, where they know I bring presents and love to give treats, still enjoy games and hearing about their concerns and helping them out when needed.

So there I was being daughter, sister and aunt – one person yet being different and relating differently. This is some small measure of how we can understand God, One being yet three distinct persons.

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The difficulty we often encounter in trying to understand how God can be three yet one is that we often think of it as an addition sum. $1+1+1+1=3$? We try to add the different persons of God together and find it hard to understand. But I am not three people I am one and so is God. Actually it is a multiplication sum: $1 \times 1 \times 1 = 1$.

It's the same when you think about me as Rector of this Benefice: I preach and teach God's word, I support and care for people pastorally and I use my leadership and administrative gifts to plan for the future and make sure that things run smoothly in the life of our four parishes. I am not three people but I have three distinct roles in our church's life; Doing things that are very different from each other and things that need very different gifts. Yet it is the same person doing them and through all the activities my basic character, intelligence and sense of humour come through (I hope). You don't have three different people as Rector. You have one person in three different roles using different gifts and abilities to serve you, and strengthen you, and lead you.

God is one being, with a consistent nature throughout. He is holy, faithful and powerful. Yet we see him acting in different ways through history and we experience different parts of his work.

God the Father, - present in creation, sustaining the world through his very word, creating human beings to have a relationship with him, holy and perfect and judging his people when they turn away from him and sin.

God the son – Jesus Christ. God incarnate – made flesh and living amongst us in human likeness. Come to earth to reveal God's loving, perfect nature to us and to take on himself our sin and failure when he died on the cross for us – in our place. This is God doing his saving work to draw us back to him. The plan was made by the creator from the beginning but put into action by the saviour.

God the Holy Spirit – giving life to the people of God. It is God's spirit working in our hearts and minds that enables us to know him and trust in him. It is the spirit working in our lives that produces the fruit of holiness: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness and self-

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control. It is the spirit giving us gifts that enables us to serve God and proclaim his name to others. He equips us with his special giftings and abilities so that we are able to carry out the work that he has given us. When we commit ourselves to Jesus in faith the Holy Spirit fills our hearts and minds and works within us to change us into Christians – God’s Holy people.

Jesus talked clearly of the father and spirit during his ministry on earth. He showed a very close co-operative relationship between the three, where each relied on the other, supported and complimented the other. They worked as one, with one purpose and objective; with the same values and ideals; In the same way that all parts of me work together to serve the churches here. The work of the Son was to make the Father known in word and action and to deal with the sin that separates us from the Holy faithful God. The Holy Spirit’s work is also to make God known to us and to enable us to know and understand him. We see them always working as a unit with one purpose and one character.

At creation we are told that God was present and that his Spirit was brooding over the water. It was through God’s word, the name that John gave Jesus that the world was brought into being. He was there with the three expressions of his nature acting as one in character and activity.

In Jesus’ ministry we see all parts of God at work. Because Jesus put aside his power when he became man we see the Holy Spirit filling him at his baptism and empowering him for his ministry. At the baptism too, we hear God the Father expressing his love and approval of Jesus and his commitment to his saving work. Jesus talked about the fact that he did nothing without the Father and that they worked together to teach and heal.

At the cross we see again all three parts of God’s nature active. We have been put right with God – our relationship with the father who created us has been restored and this has happened through Jesus’ redeeming death on the cross and the Holy Spirit working in us enables us to put our trust in him to save us from our sin.

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For many people there is one person of the trinity that they more naturally relate to than the others. Sometimes we see this changing through our lives. When I became a Christian I related very strongly to Jesus who had loved me enough to die on the cross for me. It was extremely important to me to know that I was valuable and I related strongly to the saving aspect of God's character and not so strongly to the other two.

I had a very difficult and stormy relationship with my own father and found it very difficult to trust God as Father – my experience of Fathers was that they treated you harshly and let you down. But when I'd been a Christian about ten years God began to teach me that he was the perfect model of fatherhood and that he could be trusted completely, during that time he began to heal the hurt I'd received through my relationship with my own father and replaced that gap in my life with his own presence as my perfect heavenly father who could be completely relied upon.

Then God began to show me the place of the Holy Spirit in my life and how he could work within me to produce holiness and through me to show others of his saving love.

These days I relate fairly equally to God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit but there are still times when I pray to one or other parts of his nature as seems most appropriate. Our God is a wonderful, powerful, loving and all-encompassing God, He has created us, redeemed us and gives us life in himself.