

"I am the vine, you are the branches; abide in me and you will bear much fruit." John 15:5

Vine & Branches

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Dreams

Today is Trinity Sunday!

But I'm NOT going to tell you that the Trinity is like a mango; with a peel on the outside, the fruit in the middle and a pit on the inside, three parts, one fruit!

Nor am I going to tell you that the Trinity is like Neapolitan ice cream: chocolate, vanilla and strawberry, three flavors, one ice cream cone!

No, I'm not going to tell you those things because frankly, that way of thinking about mysteries like the Trinity, is what gets us into so much trouble these days.

And not only these days! This way of thinking has got us in trouble for the last several hundred years.

Back when the Enlightenment was born. When we, in our infinite wisdom, separated ourselves from one another, from nature, from God.

We used to understand the deep connections between all things. Now we see everything "objectively." Meaning, we see everything around us as just that: a thing.

And things need no respect. Things can be used and abused. Several hundred years ago is when we forgot that we are to love people and use things; because now, we use people and love things.

Our efforts to rationalize and analyze, to define and decipher what we claim as real has had one singular effect.

It has led to enormous impoverishment. Impoverishment of imagination. Of wonder. With the Holy. With the Mysterious. With God.

And here we are this morning. A pandemic robs the breath of hundreds of thousands of people. Social upheaval, sparked by white police officers, who rob the breath of George Floyd, and of so many people of color, for far too long.

A President who, wielding a Bible, trespasses on Church land, having moments before cleared the path of non-violent protesters — with tear gas and flash grenades.

Today, in the midst of all this, I want to invite you to think about mystery. The holy. I invite you to ponder the utter vastness of what it is to be human. Because, unless we can find a way back to that sense of vastness, to that sense of the mystery and holiness of each and every human person, we will continue our long slide toward the oblivion set in motion when "I" became more important than "we."

We have reduced our sense of that vastness by systematically lifting up our conscious selves, and pretending that the "unconscious" doesn't exist, or if it does, it's a barren wasteland of idle dreams and illusions.

Our conscious lives are made up of what we're doing right now. Being awake. Deciding who is good and what is evil. Finding my comfort zone with those who look, and act and see the world just like me.

The conscious world is the rational world.

The world of laws and logic.

But then, every single night, every single one of us, goes to sleep. And in our sleep, we enter a different world. We enter the world of the unconscious.



What the psychologists tell us today, what the mystics have told us for centuries, is that our conscious mind is only the tip of the iceberg.

Our vastness lives in the unconscious mind. Just like the vastness of the iceberg that lies beneath the water line.

In our dreams, as we enter the unconscious world, the rules and regulations, the lines and borders that we think are the rhyme and reason of life, suddenly disappear.

In the world of the unconscious, we can be anybody. Gender and ethnicity, social status and even our status as human beings, becomes slippery, fleeting, and elusive.

Perhaps you've found yourself in dreams wandering about in an old house, or in a strange town, or wandering about stark naked, and wondering why?

Indeed, the beauty of the unconscious, is that while all day long we ask "how does it work?", in the unconscious world we ask: "what does it mean?"

It's in the unconscious world that we come to glimpse the Trinity. We can't analyze it, reduce it, or grasp it with our logical minds. We can only experience it.

This sense of unity in diversity, as diversity blossoms into new unity.

The Trinity, this source of all that is, this sense of that which we call God, teaching us, willing us, reminding us, that relationship is the beating heart of all that exists.

We can't analyze it or tear it apart. We can only experience it.

And when we do, suddenly, perhaps only for the briefest flicker, we experience the vastness of humanity.

It is that vastness we left behind when the so-called Enlightenment came to the fore. When so much of reality was reduced to the five senses, leaving behind the mystical, the magical, the enchanted.

We are living in days now when we need to recapture the vastness of who we are as human beings, black and white, Asian and Arab, and everyone else as well.

No matter the race, religion, gender, sexual orientation. And the place to find our sense of the vast — begins with our dreams.

When Martin Luther King, Jr gave his revolutionary speech at the Washington Mall, he shared his dreams for our nation, for our children, for his children.

Today, those dreams may look something like this. We need to seriously undertake reparations to the people of African American heritage who have for hundreds of years been systematically excluded from the bounty of this land.

Those deprivations can only be remedied with meaningful financial restitution given not out of pity, but out of justice.

We need to reform our tax system so that the people at the top begin to pay significant taxes after 40 years of contributing far too little to the commonweal.

We need to vastly reduce the size and scope of our military and spend those funds on healthcare, infrastructure, and education for our people.

Finally, we need to oppose the growing authoritarian tendencies in Washington DC and reject the hatred, the anger, and the lies.

These are not statements from a particular political point of view.

They are statements, nay, demands, made by the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

As followers of Jesus, we are commanded to lift up the poor, to care for the needy, to seek justice and peace in every circumstance, in every age. These are our dreams.

They are not unattainable! Dreams are the wellspring of every good thing that has ever or will ever come to pass.

Dreams are the rootstock of our reality, because the Trinity is most fully revealed in our dreams — if only we can learn to remember.

It was the poet who said: "That which seems the most feeble and bewildered in you — is the strongest and most determined.

Is it not your breath that has erected and hardened the structure of your bones?

And is it not a dream, that none of you remember having dreamt, that builded your cities, and fashioned all that is therein?" K. Gibran

In these modern times, we so often do our best to forget our dreams.

The alarm clock goes off, the coffee pot begins to drip, and there we are, back in the dog eat dog world.

We so often dismiss our dreams. Treating them as mere indigestion, the result of too many pieces of pepperoni pizza.

But our dreams, our unconscious longings, take us back to who we truly are.

To that reality where there is no division. Where all are one. All people, all nature, all creation.

All one with the Source who creates all things. I hope in these difficult days we can rediscover the Trinity. Not by calculation.

But by feeling. By experience. And yes, by our dreams.

There is no reason that we human beings can not live in a world in which justice and dignity and love are the true powers of this world.

We simply need to want it.

We simply need to believe it.

We simply need to live it.

+amen

10,000 March for Justice



Wowie kazaowie!!!!!!!!!!!!!!
What a marvelous show of solidarity and compassion as a uuuuuge number of folks marched from Ala Moana to the Capitol praying for, demanding and urging systematic change to how we police, how we distribute economic benefits and how we so easily excuse centuries of racism. Congratulations to the young people who organized this peaceful mass rally. **Now's the time for change.**



The Trinity

When I was preparing to defend my thesis at graduate school, my advisor coached me to say "I don't know" in response to at least one question from my committee. He said that would assure my examiners of their continued academic superiority, and would secure a passing mark for me. "No problem," I responded, **"when it comes to God talk I understand less and less everyday."** What I appreciated from my advisor was the permission to admit not knowing. Some things are simply too hard to understand, much less know; the Trinity, for example. The passage for this meditation, and in particular the half verse cited, bespeaks the ever-mysterious Trinity: God the Father loves Jesus the Son and is the source of the Holy Spirit. One way I like to connect with the Trinity is through works of art.

Religious icons are rich in history and symbolism. They are stylized representations of religious themes designed to take the viewer into the holy mysteries, and are therefore used devotionally. Popular is the icon entitled Old Testament Trinity by the **Russian Andrei Rublev** (c. 1415). It depicts the three men, or angels, who visited Abraham at the oaks of Mamre (Gen. 18). The three angels have identical faces, wear the blue of heaven, and are enclosed within a circular form. The viewer's eye moves ceaselessly from one figure to other, unable to identify the particular manifestations of the Trinity. The angels sit around a table vacant in front which invites the viewer to join them. Contemplation upon this icon is welcoming and engaging.

Less satisfying are traditional western depictions of the New Testament Trinity that image the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit as three distinct beings. Typically, the Father is portrayed as a white-bearded, old man or simply a downward pointing hand protruding from a cloud. The Son is shown as a man standing below the Father or as an infant sitting on the Father's knee. **The Holy Spirit is painted as a white dove or beam of light placed between the Father and the Son.**

Over the years I have become increasingly convinced of the personal nature of the Trinity and explored what I was sensing about it through acrylic paint on a large, 6' x 4' canvas. A viewer of this painting, entitled Trinity in the World, discovers three persons overlaid and transparent to each other (see photo above). A green figure, sideways to the canvas and similar to Leonardo da Vinci's perfectly proportioned Vitruvian Man (1492), suggests new life, symmetry of the universe, and harmony between the spiritual and material.

A feminine translucent red cruciform figure suggests passion and interconnection. A blue figure in profile seems to be running through the other two out into the world. The three figures are united at their hara, or center. They not only relate to one another transparently, but mutually dwell in one another and draw life from one another. The trinity, interwoven among a number of partial figures, challenges the viewer to follow its energy flow. In my painting, **viewers tell me they can trace the outline of any one of the three figures, but in so doing they lose track of the other two.** So it is with the Trinity, which defies succinct definition, especially when we try to apprehend the whole. But, as in icons and other works of art, we can see Jesus, and when we do, we can, as if through a mirror dimly (I Cor 13:12), imagine the Trinity.

bennett, barbara. "Don't Touch Me! Daily Stories of Gospel Relevance." Kindle Edition



Icon by Andrei Rubler