

John 3: 1-17
June 7, 2009 Trinity Sunday
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Father, Son, Holy Spirit; Creator, Redeemer, Sustainer; Spirit, Guide and Guardian; God, Jesus, Holy Spirit; no matter how you say it the Trinity is still shrouded in mystery. It seems so clear, so obvious, so comfortable and well known but given the opportunity to explain it and suddenly we move from the familiar to the unfamiliar. It is hard to pin down. Verse 8 says, *"The wind blows where it wills, and you hear the sound of it, but you don't know where it comes from or where it is going."*

Nicodemus has come to Jesus at night. There are a number of reasons we could explore on this fact alone; but in John's gospel the darkness symbolizes that Nicodemus is separated somehow from Jesus. He was a religious man himself, well educated in the Jewish word and yet he has questions, he is searching and his message to us today is one that is common to most of us here, that is, we have more questions than we do answers.

Kenneth Carter Jr. Writes this: "the wind, the Spirit (each with an origin in the Hebrew "ruach"), blows where it wills. I am learning that I can see the movements of the Spirit if I am observant and watching but I cannot control them. If we live long enough we should give up on the illusion that we are in control of anything; shouldn't we?" He goes on to suggest that "it is helpful in that realizing our limitations teaches us to rely on God and each other. Realizing our co-dependency is the wonder and mystery of new birth."

Does this explain our Triune God? Is this wonder and mystery present in the Triune God? Does a Triune God remind us that God is like the wind, more to it than what we can see? Do we recognize God's boundlessness and movement from familiar to mystery? Just a few questions to ponder as we think about the Trinity.

Take for instance the meal we will partake in a few moments. We will ask God's Spirit to come and be with us in these pieces of bread and sips of juice but will we be aware of the movement we will make from the familiarity of the bread and the juice to the mystery that makes it sacred. In our celebration of these elements we recall our creation and our creator in whose image we are made and whose breath gives us life. We will remember the life and teachings, the death and resurrection of Jesus and we will ask the Holy Spirit to bless the gifts.

We do the same with Baptism; we ask the Spirit to touch the waters we use to make them move from familiar everyday water to the waters of Baptism, mystery. The language of the Trinity helps us to move and understand going from familiar to mystery.

But what has Nicodemus to do with all of this? Well, Nicodemus has come at night, not wanting to be seen by those who know him. Have you ever done that? Gone to something or somewhere out of curiosity but not wanting to be recognised, hoping no one you know sees you there and questions why you would be there? Nicodemus is a

leader in the community he does not want to be seen as interested in what this new guy is saying. Nicodemus has come to check things out and to ask some tough questions of this new faith. He takes a stab at what he sees as an illogical claim, that of baptism, this image of being born again so literal in its interpretation according to Nicodemus. As he weighs the answer given by Jesus he is also weighing his own belief in what Jesus is saying. Perhaps asking himself, "Can I commit to this new faith?" What has really drawn Nicodemus in is his own curiosity; his own desire to be in closer relationship to God.

We all desire a closer relationship to God; that is why we come here as regularly as life allows. It is in our nature to want something more from God and with God – relationship. It begins early; it is not uncommon for a four or five year old to ask questions about angels, or heaven or death. It is amazing how children so young can have deep understandings and even philosophical discussion about such adult matters. The searching begins early our response to such searching can change our lives and theirs.

Robert Frost writes in his poem "The Road Less Travelled" about standing at the spiritual fork in the road and weighing the options of each path. To take the well-worn path or to travel that less travelled path. For Nicodemus the well-worn path is the traditional Jewish teachings and the path less travelled is the new faith Jesus was presenting.

In the end of our story Nicodemus walks away and we never know which path he chooses. It's funny how our stories end in the Bible, never really giving us a firm conclusion, always leaving it up to us to imagine how it turned out. All of the people it is reported that Jesus touches, heals, and raises up go off to the unknown. No conclusion for the reader, no neatly tied up ending to give us the certainty we seek. There is no certainty with Jesus. There is no certainty with God – only faith.

As a chaplain, I was called in to talk with a man who had decided to discontinue his dialysis that he had been undergoing for some time. It meant certain death within a short period of time. He and his wife had been faithful Anglicans, even studying Theology at Queen's at various times throughout their lives and he had one question for me, the chaplain, *"What if we had it all wrong? What if none of it was true, there was no heaven, there was no God, there was nothing after death?"*

A brave and honest question from a dying man and a question that scared this particular chaplain rigid. What in the world was I going to say to that? How could I answer that question? After a short silence my only response was would you have lived your life differently if you had the answer, the certainty of a room in a mansion, with streets of gold as our stories tell us.

I have since pondered this question numerous times and it always leads me to the same place. Is this the happy ending we are longing for; that place over the horizon where there is no pain, no poverty, no war, no sorrow or is it more about the life you have had; the people you have loved; the people you have helped along the way.

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In our time of communion as we ready ourselves for the Eucharistic meal we will proclaim the mystery of our faith. The mystery that gives us life as witnessed in the creation around us; sustains us through our desire to be in relationship and travels with us in the wind not fully knowing where it comes from or where it will take us next. We can only live in faith that the Trinity includes us.

Amen