

Trinity & Pride 7 June 2020

At first glance it would seem that Trinity Sunday and Pride Sunday would have little, if anything in common. To be honest, with the events that have unfolded over the past 10 days, I wasn't sure that I could preach about Trinity Sunday or Pride Sunday. And yet as I struggled with the text, and the news, it became clear to me. I **had** to preach about Trinity and Pride and Racism and White Privilege.

Because all of the aforementioned have one thing in common.

Relationship.

You see, if I am prepared to be vulnerable and let my guard down so I can learn more about you, that means I am prepared to enter into relationship with you. It means as I get to know more about you; what is important to you becomes important to me. If I'm not prepared to invest time to get to learn about you; to get to know you, then what is important to you doesn't matter to me, because **you** don't matter to me.

With respect to the Trinity...

I have tried every year over the past 12 years to figure out the Triune God. And when I use illustrations such as water, ice and steam, that ventures into modalism and that's not what the Holy Trinity is. Modalism says that the Trinity is three modes or aspects of the Divine Revelation.

What the trinity **IS** is three distinct, separate entities that are all equal and dependent on the other. We cannot have a full understanding of God without Jesus and the Holy Spirit. Similarly, we cannot have a full understanding of the Holy Spirit without Jesus and God. And we cannot have a full understanding of Jesus without God and the Holy Spirit. God exists as three persons yet of one substance. Neither can exist without the other.

Our Old Testament reading from Isaiah tells us this...

"To whom then will you compare me, or who is my equal? says the Holy One.
Lift up your eyes on high and see: Who created these?
He who brings out their host and numbers them, calling them all by name;
because he is great in strength, mighty in power, not one is missing."

Not one is missing. In the eyes of God all are welcome at the table. All are worthy of love, and respect. All are the same.

Relationship is at the heart of the Trinity. It is because of God's love for all God's children, that we can know the deep, grace-filled love that comes from the Divine. The relationship recognises that the Divinity in me, sees and honours the Divinity in you.

With respect to Pride

Canada reached a milestone in July 2005 when gay marriage was made legal. Now that it is legal, can we please simply call it marriage equality? Equality is something critical in understanding why we need things like Pride and why there are movements like Black Lives Matter and #Me Too.

I am a Queer woman. I love and have been loved by both women and men. I am now free to marry the person I love in both of my Churches. Which makes me feel like I am a part of something much greater than myself. Before it felt that I was welcome to the door and could look in the window, but could not go in.

Now, if I should fall in love and decide to get married, I can make that commitment before my Church families and before God, in a house of God. There are many parts of the world in which it is still illegal to love the "wrong" person. Wrong meaning a person of the same gender as you. Where in the Bible does it talk about loving the wrong person or anyone being less than in God's eyes?

It doesn't.

Jesus gave his new commandment in John's Gospel to love God above all others and to love our neighbours as ourselves. Jesus says "there is no commandment greater than these." So if it's good enough for God, why isn't it good enough for the rest of the world?

Events such as Pride exist because those of us who are considered outside the "normal" are treated as "less than". Nobody deserves to be treated this way. People like me wear rainbow and talk about sexuality and love because we want to be treated the SAME as anyone else. We don't want to be more. We want to be equal.

Relationship, equality and respect are at the heart of Pride. It is because of God's love for all God's children, wherever we are on the rainbow, that we can know the deep, grace-filled love that comes from the Divine. The relationship recognises that the Divinity in me sees and honours the Divinity in you.

With respect to Black Lives Matter...

His name was George Floyd. He was 46 years old and he died under the knee of a police officer after repeatedly saying he couldn't breathe. Say his name. George Floyd. Mr. Floyd died because he was black.

I come from a place of privilege. I was taught that if I was ever in trouble I should find a police officer and they would help me. At one time I worked for the Ontario Provincial Police as Civilian and was treated very well. When I've been out driving at night, I worry that I may break down and not be able to get help.

I don't worry if I see the lights of a police car. I know, if I see the lights of a police car, it's likely because I've been caught speeding or I'm being pulled over because of a mechanical issue. Not because of the colour of my skin or how my name sounds.

I have never had to speak to a young black man about how he governs himself in the presence of a police office, for fear of arrest or worse.

The gospel tells us...

"From his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. The law indeed was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ." Grace and truth through Jesus, the law given to all of us that we may know eternal life. That we may ALL know eternal life. Regardless of what some "Christian's" would have you believe, God does not discriminate. We don't actually know what God looks like...which is why it's appropriate that there should be renderings of black Jesus in black Churches. And olive-skinned Jesus in middle-eastern Churches. I'm fairly confident that God is not a white man, and as such we must stop depicting God with gender and race. God is God. And God is good. And God is Love.

Black Lives Matter is important because when we see images of violence, such as what happened to George Floyd, it looks as though his life was not as important as the mostly white police officers who detained him and eventually killed him. White people can be allies to the BLM movement. We must take direction, provide support and speak up when we see something that is against what God would have us do as God's beloved children. We do not take over. We ask, we listen, we help.

With respect to racism...

Now, lest we feel slightly smug that Canada doesn't have these kinds of issues...

Her name was Chantel Moore. She was 26 years old and she was shot by the police, who were doing a "wellness check". Say her name. Chantel Moore. Ms. Moore was killed because she was Indigenous. Like the 40 women and girls who have disappeared and/or been killed along the Highway of Tears since 1971.

Like the dark legacy of Residential Schools, we have not yet learned. The moment we consider someone as "less than" is the moment we break God's heart. The moment we need to break someone down; take away their language and culture because it isn't like ours, is the moment we fail at being a true Child of God. Because God does not see race. God sees only God's children.

Relationship and respect are at the heart of ending racism, especially systemic racism. It is because of God's love for all God's children, whatever the colour of our skin, that we can know the deep, grace-filled love that comes from the Divine. The relationship which recognises that the Divinity in me sees and honours the Divinity in you.

With respect to White Privilege

If you are not a person of colour, you receive white privilege. This isn't to say that all white people are good. We all know that not to be true. When it comes to crimes committed, the vast majority are committed by white people. And yet, when we look at incarceration rates, blacks and other persons of colour are disproportionately sent to jail then persons who are white. Sentences for people of colour are generally tougher.

This isn't to say that all white people have life easy. We know that is not true. There is poverty in white communities and neighbourhoods, just as there is in black or Indigenous communities and neighbourhoods. Chances are, if you are white, no-one has ever asked you where you are "originally" from.

It isn't enough to say "I know plenty of black people". It's the same sort of thing as saying "it doesn't directly affect me, therefore I don't need to be directly involved".

And that, my friends, is why there have been riots. You see, it's not enough to stand silently by while people of colour face discrimination and violence.

It's not enough to say "my life is difficult too". Yes, it may be. But the time has come to stand up and use your white privilege. If you have ever been in a meeting and when trying to speak were dismissed or ignored, then when someone else made the same point and were heard, you can understand about privilege. I have been ignored, shouted over and contradicted when I tried to make a point, yet when a male colleague made the same point he was heard and celebrated. Is it right? Absolutely not.

People of colour do not want white guilt. That doesn't solve anything. We cannot control the colour of our skin anymore than we can our gender, our handedness or our sexuality. What we can do is refuse to be silent when an injustice is taking place.

We must be prepared to live the truth, which can be a difficult truth...the ideology of "That's the way it's always been done" isn't always the best or only way. That the "white Christian way" when it comes to residential schools, or "white-washing" in the movie industry, is not appropriate. And it must stop.

As a white woman I experience more privilege than a woman of colour. It shouldn't be so. Thus it's up to me when I see racism happening, to step up and say something. To stand up and do something. Because when we refuse to get involved it's very much the same as condoning racism, sexism, or ageism.

Those of us who have experienced being treated differently or "less than" don't want to be elevated above everyone else. Nothing could be farther from the truth. We simply want to be treated the same. We want to live in a world that truly IS colourblind. We want to leave our children a legacy of equality and celebration, not a legacy of tolerance and otherness.

We are not commanded to like one another. There are people for whom relationship is very difficult, if not impossible. It is absolutely okay to walk away from those situations. It is NOT okay to think that you are better than anyone else because of the colour of your skin, your gender, or your sexuality.

In the eyes of God we are all the same. We are all God's beloved children. And whether you see God through the lenses of Baha'i, Buddhism, Christianity, Confucianism, Hinduism, Islam, Jainism, Judaism, Shinto, Sikhism, Taoism, Zoroastrianism, or other religious group, one thing remains the same. We are called to love one another as we would wish to be loved; to treat one another as we wish to be treated.

In other words, all are Welcome, all are Equal, and all are Loved.

Dear God, may it be so. May you show us a brighter and better way.

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Trinity/Pride Sunday
7 June 2020

Isaiah 40.25-31
Philippians 4.4-9
John 1.1-18