

St. Andrews Lutheran Church, Tallebudgera

30th March 2021 – Trinity Sunday, year B

ISAIAH 6:1-8

HEAR, UNDERSTAND, ACT

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord and saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

Do you remember much about your school years, might be easier for some than others. Some of you are still there of course, so try and remember about your early school years. Can you remember something called 'reading comprehension' where you needed to read a text then show that you understood what was happening by explaining or responding to it.

This time around at university I was taught a similar idea with 'bloom's taxonomy'. All the teachers here are nodding their heads. In this diagram remembering is the simplest task, then as you move up the pyramid it becomes more complex and challenging, but you also get to show greater understanding of what you heard.

In today's reading we hear about Isaiah going through a similar process. He see's a vision of the Lord and is overwhelmed by the contrast between his own sinfulness and God's Holiness. Let's have a look at today's reading again.

<Slide2> From Isaiah 6:5-8 CEV

⁵ Then I cried out, "I'm doomed! Everything I say is sinful, and so are the words of everyone around me. Yet I have seen the King, the Lord All-Powerful."

⁶ One of the flaming creatures flew over to me with a burning coal that it had taken from the altar with a pair of metal tongs. ⁷ It touched my lips with the hot coal and said, "This has touched your lips. Your sins are forgiven, and you are no longer guilty."

⁸ After this, I heard the Lord ask, "Is there anyone I can send? Will someone go for us?"

"I'll go," I answered. "Send me!"

So, what's happening here? Isaiah heard the word of the Lord, he took what he knew about Israel's purity laws and he applied that to what the angel did with the coal. Isaiah then thought about his ability to respond to the Lord's question and he acted. By working through a similar process to what we learn to do in school, Isaiah saw that God had created a new reality for him, one in which he could now do the Lord's work.

Last week we heard about how the Holy Spirit comes with wind and engulfs us in fire. And yet we are not burned up or consumed by this Holiness of God. Today this same thing has happened to Isaiah. These two Sundays of the church year emphasise the Holy Spirit of the Trinity and examine what he does for us and how this can lead us from hearing the Word, to understanding the word, to acting upon the word of the Lord.

When we remember the Lord and praise him. When we remember the Lord and bless one another, when we remember the Lord and recount his deeds, when we remember the Lord and read the Bible. These are the times when we are blessed by God, these are the times when the Holy Spirit is active in our lives. These are the times when the name of the Lord is on our hearts and on our lips, just as that burning coal was on Isaiah's lips.

In these ways whether by 'reading comprehension' or the 'blooms taxonomy' we show that we really have understood what God has done for us.

Today is called Trinity Sunday and usually at this time of year we give some sort of analogy or anecdote to explain the how we worship only one God but three persons, and the differences between the Father the Son and the Holy Spirit. But it is really hard to do. There are no simple easy verses from which we hear the mystery of, the Holy spirit and the Trinity, explained. This is why our creed is not a simple retelling of facts and quotes from the Bible. Our church needed some really good comprehension of the Scriptures and help from the Holy Spirit to create our three Creeds. They had a look at readings like today's and thought about and worked through different theories and explanations, they made many hypotheses before they could act and teach with confidence about the Holy Trinity.

And it is a key and very important teaching in the Christian Church. In fact, this teaching, that God shows Himself to us and works in the world and our lives as the Father, as the Son, and as the Holy Spirit, is the teaching which defines for us what is a Christian Church and what is not.

This teaching of the Trinity unites all the different denominations of Christianity. The Roman Catholics, Greek orthodox, Baptist, Anglican, Uniting, Pentecostal and Lutheran churches all confess "one Holy and universal church".

All religious groups who disagree with us about the Trinity are not what we term to be Christian, groups like the Jehovah's witness, Mormons, Muslims, Buddhists, and Jews. None of those people worship the father son and holy spirit.

The Trinity, which we remember and celebrate today is the point where we draw the line.

There is no secret to understanding the Trinity and the Holy Spirit is not hidden in the Bible, it's just a bit hard to understand. I recall once being told that, "Secrets once revealed are no longer secret, but a mystery explained remains a mystery". The Trinity is and remains a mystery; we kind of get it, but it hurts our brain when we try to think about it a bit too hard.

When Isaiah realises what happened to him, he does not just remember that he is forgiven and no longer guilty, he thinks about what this means for himself and shows us that he understands what happened. and then he responds to that mystery with faith and action.

Our explanation of the Holy Trinity is a bit like that, we have a lot of information and many bible verses to look at, but when somebody asks us to explain the Trinity it is better to confess that we believe a mystery, to act in faith.

If you like, Our creeds are a creative way to confess our faith in the Holy Spirit, summarising what we read, hear and remember. When you confess your creed you act out your faith Just like Isaiah does when he says “I will Go, Send me”

And this is why we have a special day to celebrate and remember the Trinity, just like for Jesus’ birth, death and ascension. The Trinity is an important feature of our faith. Today is a day when we show to one another, and to all those who have heard the Good news of Jesus’s Crucifixion, that we have remembered, we have understood, and we have acted on our faith.

So, then. What does this mean for us? How does this apply to my life, personally? With today’s reading how do we Hear, Understand, Act? Well, we are in church today, Just like Isaiah was at the start of today’s reading, so let us confess with him:

⁵ Then I cried out, “I’m doomed! Everything I say is sinful, and so are the words of everyone around me. Yet I have seen the King, the Lord All-Powerful.”

Isiah recalls the facts of his life in comparison with the Holiness of God and he knows he is a Sinner. He acknowledges our Lord as the creator of all things and the one true God:

I believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible.

And then Isaiah repents of his sinfulness. When we repent, we know that our God is merciful and forgiving.

⁶ One of the flaming creatures flew over to me with a burning coal that it had taken from the altar with a pair of metal tongs. ⁷ It touched my lips with the hot coal and said, “This has touched your lips. Your sins are forgiven, and you are no longer guilty.”

We know our God is merciful and forgiving, Just like this stone that came from God’s altar, God’s Son came from heaven to earth to pay of our debts, remove our sin, putting us into a right and proper relationship with our creator.

⁸ After this, I heard the Lord ask, “Is there anyone I can send? Will someone go for us?”

Isaiah must have been a quick thinker. Moments ago he was a sinner standing in the presence of the Lord. But now...

Have we also heard? Have we also understood? Are we ready to act?

We are created by the Father, we were saved by Jesus Christ the Son and we know that who the Son sets free will be free indeed. Then, through those mysteries of confession absolution, Baptism and Holy Communion we are continuously sanctified by the Holy Spirit. This is why we say:

And I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and Giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son; who with the Father and the Son together is worshiped and glorified; who spoke by the Prophets. And I believe in one holy Christian and apostolic Church. I acknowledge one

Baptism for the forgiveness of sins; and I look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come.

Just like Isaiah, we have heard that God the Father created us, we have heard that we are redeemed and forgiven because of the work Jesus did on the cross at Easter. We hear that God has provided us with all the things that we need and that by the gift of his Holy Spirit we are set apart as Holy and able to stand in the presence of our God.

And so when the Holy Trinity asks us Whom shall I send? When the Father, Son and Holy Spirit says “Who will go for us?” How do we act? How do we show that we have heard and understood?

⁸After this, I heard the Lord ask, “Is there anyone I can send? Will someone go for us?”

“I’ll go,” I answered. “Send me!”

The peace of God that passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds forever in Christ Jesus. Amen.

FOR FURTHER REFLECTION/DISCUSSION:

There are many ways to misunderstand and misrepresent the Holy Trinity. What are some that you have heard?

This YouTube from LutheranSatire might help you identify some:

<https://youtu.be/KQLfgaUoQCw>

Other than coming to church on Sunday, what are some ways that you have already acted and shown that you have heard and understood the good news of Jesus Christ Crucified?

What is your favourite analogy to explain the Trinity?