

Reading: John 16:12-15

Open us to fresh meaning for our lives, O God.

Have you ever been caught up in a moment that seems to carry you beyond yourself? A moment where all the drudgery of everyday life seems to be transformed; where life in that moment seems to take on a deeper meaning, a greater clarity and fresh meaning. The Bible has within it many collections of such moments for the people of God. They happened all the time around Jesus. He was like a window onto God. Wherever He went, people saw things in a new way.

I have been fortunate enough to have had many such experiences. One was being on a West Coast beach at night, alone. It was at Okarito, for those who know that beach. It was a clear, clear night. The stars seemed to go on forever. The moon was full ... and then a white heron flew past. I was carried forever beyond myself to the greater mystery of God in Creation. In trying to describe that moment I would echo T.S. Eliot, the poet: *words strain, / Crack and sometimes break under the burden, Under the tension, slip, slide, perish, / Decay with imprecision, will not stay in place.*

Despite the difficulty of doing God justice in words alone, the church over two millennia does have some very profound and helpful things to say about God. It is like Jesus says in the gospel "When the Spirit of Truth comes, He will guide you into all truth." The disciples couldn't handle it all then, but much has emerged since. We understand God best as a community of love: Father, Son and Holy Spirit, our Creator, Redeemer and Giver of Life. We sometimes get worried about how God can be one and yet three, but we deal with this reality on a day to day basis with ease. I am just one person, but my girls know me as dad, Rosemary as a husband, and Jane as a brother. When I am being a husband, that takes nothing away from my being a father. Indeed, when I am good father, I am being a good husband too. In this simple illustration we can begin to see how God can be three and yet one and when the Spirit is present so is God in fullness. We are familiar too in nature with one thing being three forms. When I make myself a cup of tea, preferably Earl Grey with just touch of trim milk, the water in jug is transformed from liquid to steam, but it is still water. You can also find water as ice. Water is three: liquid, steam and ice, yet it is one. Its chemical makeup, H₂O does not change, though its form does.

For us, the difference all this makes is very profound. Firstly, we worship and serve a God who can never be fully understood. God is more than we are.

Because of this we can always learn more, and the depths of God's love can never be exhausted. That is good news because we know when it comes to human love, the depths can often be exhausted. We see that played out each night on the news. Secondly, because we are made in the image and likeness of God, we are made to need others. And we have a need to be needed. This is what older people often fear about growing old. This loss of dignity is often around the loss of community and the need to have something worthwhile to offer. Thirdly, we need relationships: we are dependent beings. The killer disease is loneliness. This is why it is so important to gather as God's people, because in the gathering we become more than we are. Left to ourselves we can become isolated and inward looking but in relationship with others life begins to take on meaning. Jesus' teaching then, to love others as ourselves, isn't just a nice add on. It is essential for our mental health. It gives our lives meaning and purpose. Nick could be just making this up but research led by the Canterbury District Health Board entitled "All right?" bears this out. The latest survey shows that countering earthquake related stress: aftershocks, road works, damaged homes and life in a construction zone, the single biggest aid to mental health is connectedness. This is where churches have such a vital role to play. "Church communities have been pillars of support and wellbeing for many, as safe places where people are available to listen and share." said Dr Lucy D'Aeth. "When Canterbury lost so many church buildings," the doctor concluded, "we learned that the church is the community not the building." The five ways proposed by the study to stay healthy are enhanced in church life: connecting with people, helping people, noticing good things, learning new things, being active. Councillor Glenn Livingstone of the Christchurch City Council said, "I see all five in action when I go to church". The study also uncovered that the numbers of people who feel connected to church or karakia has risen across the city since the quakes and that 42% of the population find their faith helps them post earthquake.¹

You see the more we contemplate God, the more we come into God's presence and the more we want to connect with others. The more we connect with others, the more we find fulfilment of life for ourselves. It is only as we reconnect with God that we reconnect with who we really are, and so, find meaning for our lives. I think this is why some people fear coming to church. They know deep down that this God thing might draw them into discovering that it is in serving others that our life begins to take on meaning. In the Trinity, we see a pattern of relationship that speaks of how we are to be towards others and towards the world. The threeness of Trinity means community, a society of persons moving constantly out towards one another in self giving, in living and in being in the perfect oneness we call 'love'. To be a Christian is to acquire the habit of living and loving in this joyful, connected way. This is what lies at the heart of Trinity Sunday.

¹ *Taonga Eastertide* 2016// No. 51, page 39