



# CHRIST CHURCH CRANBROOK

## **God = Jesus = Spirit\_ - Trinity Sunday- 6\_12\_2022**

I speak to you today as a sinner to sinners, as the beloved of God to God's beloved, as one called to bear witness to those called to bear witness. Amen. Please be seated.

As many of you know, I don't preach with any notes, but sometimes I do. And when I do, I like to have them with me just in case. Everything that we can say about God has been given to us through Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is not merely a moral model. He's not merely a great teacher or a rabbi. He's not merely a prophet or a priest. He is not merely a monarch or a king. Jesus Christ comes to us as the revelation of God.

And this is key for us to note because there are many different variants within the Christian tradition, which will hold onto Jesus, the teacher; will hold onto Jesus, the prophet; will hold onto Jesus, the priest; will hold onto Jesus, the king, but the truest statement about the Christian faith about Jesus is that He is the revelation of God.

So much so that if we are to know who God is, we simply have to look at Jesus. Jesus is the definitive revelation of God, so that there can almost be an equal sign between the word "God" and "Jesus," because in Jesus, we see who God truly is. And that revelation is powerful. That revelation is a moment of transformation for those. We cannot merely acknowledge Jesus as the revelation of God. We can only experience that revelation.

And that experience of revelation is itself a kind of revelation of God as the Holy Spirit. The experience in our lives of grace, the experience in our lives as reconciliation, that experience in our lives as forgiveness, that experience in our lives of love, that experience in our lives as the ability to stand up after we've been knocked down or laid low, and to be able to say at the end of the day, hallelujah Christ is risen! That is the holy spirit inside of us.

And that too is a revelation of God because God has come, not merely to give us knowledge and insight. God has come not merely to provide for us a kind of template for good living. God has come, not merely to give us some commands that make sense to live our lives by, but God has come to dwell in us so that we might dwell in God through grace. Everything that Jesus has by nature, we have by grace.

And this is critical for us to realize, because everything pivots in our faith on recognizing that Jesus is the revelation of God and that the Holy Spirit in us is God's life living through us. And this is why today is so important. When we say that God is Trinity, that God is three persons in one God, this is not an opportunity to engage in speculative theology. It's a moment for us to claim and understand and to be claimed by this incredible revelation of God, through Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit.

On Trinity Sunday, it is common to talk about the unity and diversity within God. And that is all true. And on Trinity Sunday, it's often the case that people will talk about the way in which the Trinity itself is a community of persons that gives to us a kind of ideal of love and justice. That should be one that we should live by in our own lives. But the critical point of Trinity Sunday is for you to see that the God who comes to you is Christ. The God who comes to you in the Holy Spirit, this God is truly God. This is the God we worship. This is the source of the universe. This is the source of power. This is the life that is stronger than death, the love that can turn back hate. This is God.

And from the beginning, those of us who say, holy, holy, holy recognize that in these three persons of the Trinity, we meet God truly. And to somehow bring that home to you today, I want to share with you an image from the writings of Hildegard of Bingen. She was a 12th century abbess and mathematician and playwright and poet and incredible mystic. And she wrote a beautiful book in which she instructed her illustrator to convey this vision of God, which comes to us. And it's right on your bulletin. And it's also appearing for those of you at home, right about over here.

And this is what she calls in this detail, Three Persons. It's from her great writing called *Scivias*, which is from the Latin *sci vias Domini*, know the ways of the Lord. And for Hildegard, the Trinity is aptly represented from this vision that she had of Jesus coming to her through some rings of both fire and light. And so this Jesus you see in this illustration comes as a kind of brilliant blue sapphire, and he is surrounded by this glowing, warmth and fire of the Holy Spirit. And on the outer circle is the serene light of God, the Father, that shines even in the darkness, and says from the beginning of creation, let there be light.

It would be wrong for us to see in this image, a kind of merely two-dimensional representation so that you have hard edges over the blue Jesus and the yellow Holy Spirit and the gray and beautiful yellow outer ring of light that is the Father. It would be wrong for us to see hard edges in this. It's not that Hildegard was somehow trying to represent Neapolitan ice cream, in which you have one flavor then the other, then the other side by side, but never quite mixing together. That is not what her point is in this image. It's rather that in the Trinity, this image is coming towards you. This Jesus is walking towards you.

You can even see if you look closely, the leg of the Jesus who is depicted is bent. And He's walking and He's holding out His hands, which to her was to convey the divine compassion incarnate in Christ. And think with me for a moment, what it means to say that the divine compassion was revealed in Christ. That means that God was willing to suffer with you because to have compassion is to have the ability to suffer with. *Compassion*, from its roots, to suffer with.

So this Jesus comes walking towards you, prayer, delivering this message of divine compassion. And this movement then from God to you is not that there are distinct persons in Jesus, but rather that when Jesus comes, it is the fullness of the revelation of God. Christ is walking towards us, Hildegard wants to say. And this God is always bigger than we can ever imagine in our lives. And that last piece is seen on the edges of this image where you see that the image of God, the halo of God, the light that is from everlasting and to everlasting is just starting to overlap the edges of the picture.

What does it mean for you that God in Christ is walking toward you? What does it mean for you to know that at the heart of everything, the most intimate part of God is God's loving compassion for you? What way can you begin walking to God today? Because to walk means you can never stay still, but you have to walk and proceed and take step by step. What new step is God inviting you to take towards God in Christ today? And know in that question I ask that we will all take that step as a response to the Holy Spirit who is always already among us and in us and working through us

Recently, I have been delighted to discover a poem that was written by a poet named Jay Hulme. Jay was raised in a way that he did not find any fit with Christianity and was living a very secular life in London. And then in 2019, he had one of those incredible conversion experiences when he realized that Christ was walking to him and was inviting him into relationship. And, of course, after becoming incredibly attached to his church community, everything closed down in London in 2020. And so he had to suffer that isolation that we all had to suffer over the past two years.

And so his poems, which I think the title is "Broken Sermons," is a magnificent discussion of faith and God in Christ. And this is the one that I want to finish with today, entitled "What I Could Not See." And it's kind of a prayer.

The hardest part is realizing that you were there for it all  
Even in that death dive, drawing into myself  
The fervored spiral, the ill health, the nothing else  
You were there when the night fell  
Saw the beating of flesh, the empty stomach  
The microcosm of madness, the bloody tile

You were there for the hate crimes and the filthy pavements

The broken lips, the shouting out for something, anything  
This icy trembling, empty aching  
The bits of myself that are tucked, shaking away  
You lived through the memories I groomed over, that I buried deep  
Slipped beneath smiles and haircuts and well fitting, but over worn outfits

There's no fooling you  
You witness the things I won't even say in confession  
Done when I was yet to see your care  
You stood beside me grieving as I called out  
Begging for a God already there

On Trinity Sunday, we give thanks for the God who is already here in Christ. We give thanks for the spirit that lifts us up and fills us and enables us to continue walking to Christ. We give thanks for the compassion that God revealed in Christ. And we say, holy, holy, holy for the God of the universe has decided to come and to be with us, and has considered this day incomplete without each one of you.

Amen.