

*Sermon preached at Trinity Memorial Church, Philadelphia, By the Rev. Edward G. Rice, Priest-In-Charge; Trinity Sunday Year C; May 31<sup>st</sup>, 2010; Proverbs 8:1-4, 22-31; Psalm 8; Romans 5:1-5; John 16:12-15*

Today is Trinity Sunday—as it were, our Paternal Feast. As many commentators point out, during the first half of the Church Year we read about the mighty acts of God by which we have been saved. In the second half, the Season of Pentecost, we read about how God would like us to respond: by living a life led by the Spirit of God, a life filled with justice and peace making, a life filled with love and sharing, a life filled with joy and hope. The transition Sunday between those two halves is Trinity Sunday where, some would say, we focus on a human doctrine—the doctrine of the Trinity. I have always preferred to see it as the one Sunday we focus on who God is and how God relates to God’s self, the world, and all the creatures of God. I believe strongly that our understanding of *who* God is and *how* God is directly influences how we respond to God’s call to us.

Since this is also the Memorial Day weekend when attendance is normally low, and this has been one hell of a week, I am going to tell three stories—or muse on three ideas—instead of offering a traditional sermon.

The first lesson we read today, from the Book of Proverbs, is about Wisdom, the personification of the Holy Spirit, about how Wisdom was there at the beginning of Creation, about how Wisdom helped set some of the boundaries and limits of Creation.

Maybe some of you have read one of the news articles based on recent experiments at the Fermi National Accelerator Laboratory near Chicago. The lab is one of those super colliders where they take protons, speed them up to close to the speed of light, and then smash them into each other in an attempt to reproduce the conditions that existed immediately following the big bang out of which our universe, and everything else that exists, was created.

Apparently, by the rules of normal particle physics, that big bang should have caused the creation of an equal amount of matter (protons, neutrons, electrons, and other sub-atomic particles) and its evil cousin anti-matter (that is, anti-protons, anti-neutrons, anti-electrons, and other anti-sub-atomic particles). And—you guessed it—if that had happened, poof—all the anti-matter would have caused the destruction of all the matter—therefore no universe or anything else. But, as we know from the last time we stubbed our toe or looked in the mirror, there *is* a lot of stuff out there, real stuff, bump-into-hurt-yourself stuff. The problem is that prior to some of these recent discoveries the physicists could not explain why all this stuff exists.

What they now think they have found is that there are some particles they call neutral B-mesons that are famous for being fickle—that is, they oscillate back and forth from being matter and anti-matter several trillion times a second. As it happens, these neutral B-mesons, created in the proton-antiproton collisions, seem to go from their anti-matter state to their matter state more rapidly than they go the other way around, leading to an eventual preponderance of matter over antimatter of about 1 percent, when they decay to muons—sort of fat electrons. And that may just be enough of an anomaly for everything, including you and me, to exist.

Or as one of the scientists, Joe Lykken, a theorist at Fermilab, said, “So I would not say that this announcement is the equivalent of seeing the face of God, but it might turn out to be the toe of God.” (“A New Clue to Explain Existence” By Dennis Overbye; The New York Times; May 17, 2010.)

**All of which sounds to me, in that mind of mine which tends to connect everything to everything else, like Wisdom—there at the beginning of creation, creating boundaries so that things can exist and be life-giving, and not just chaos which can be pretty empty and destructive and damaging to life, instead of love which enables thing to be and be beautiful. Thank you, God, for that gentle touch that made all the difference. The God we have, it turns out, is about life, order, beauty—life!!**

My second story, if not about physics, is about a physicist, Albert Einstein. At one point Einstein wrote in one of his journals that a major turning point in his life occurred when someone gave him a compass when he was about four years old. Up until that point, he thought that things only moved from one place to another when something touched or pushed them—a human hand, the wind, whatever. But whatever moved the needle on that compass was some invisible force, a force he could not see or feel, and that got him to wondering what other invisible forces there were and how they worked—all of which led to some very important theories, including some of those about particle physics mentioned in my first story.

We are just leaving an age dominated by the Enlightenment and a kind of materialism which, among other things, acted as if the only things that counted were the things that were real, things you could touch and prove and scientifically know as real. As difficult as this present age is, the age we are beginning to live into in a stumbling and confusing way, seems to know that invisible forces like love and hate, like hope and possibility, like God and other invisible things that point to meaning, love, and beauty are very real and need to be taken seriously if one wants a life of meaning, hope, beauty, and joy.

**I remember attending a clergy conference in the mid-seventies where a theologian told us that the new physics, which would take about fifty years to re-shape human consciousness, would make it more possible for people to believe in God, the importance of spirituality, and mythological understandings of things. We now live in that age, and that is why questions of meaning and spirituality are so much more important to folks.**

My final story is about life. As I understand it, scientists now know what conditions are necessary for the creation of life. For life to exist, conditions need to be such that proteins can be brought into being. To create proteins, as I understand it, strings of amino acids, enzymes that act together in a particular way, need to be present, and the condition that allows them to fold over and join together also needs to be present. From what I have heard and read, scientists now are searching the universe for other places, aside from the earth, where these conditions might be present. Much of this is not new. But what I had not heard or read until just recently is that the probability for those conditions that enable life to exist are infinitesimally small, so small and improbable that some scientists are saying that the existence of life itself is, as it were, a miracle.

I also read recently that all the water on earth, or at least virtually all of it, most probably came from one comet that struck the earth and then had its ice tail melt into what eventually formed our streams, rivers and oceans. That the water we have on earth was not created here, but came from the heavens—a gift from the heavens. That means that the water we are going to pour into the Communion chalice in a few minutes is water that was around when Moses struck the rock in the desert because the people were thirsty. That all water is a gift from above. And, of course, life could not exist without that water.

As I was thinking about this yesterday, I looked out the window and saw the beauty of the trees covered with their new spring leaves shimmering in the breezes. The beauty of it, the wonder of it. The serenade of the birds singing in those trees literally brought me to tears. It's all a miracle and a gift and O so beautiful!

So today we think about God, how God relates to Creation, how God relates to us, how God relates to God's self. The Wisdom of God that overcomes chaos and nothingness. The way God acts subtly and invisibly to bring life and vitality out of nothingness and death, hope and possibility out of despair; how God brings together and connects things in such a way that there is beauty and love and meaning.

It is a wonder, isn't it! And I am glad we set aside a Sunday to remember and be reminded of who God is and how God is and how that blesses us in so many ways. In the Name of Jesus Christ Our Lord. Amen.