

A Sermon by the Rev. Jeffrey A. Packard	Prepared for the congregation of Christ Episcopal Church, Spotsylvania, VA
To be delivered on May 30, 2010	On the occasion of Trinity Sunday

Text: John 16:12-15

### Title

Well, it's Trinity Sunday. And that means that it's time for my annual sermon on the Holy Trinity. I know, you all can't wait. This is the sermon that people line up to hear every year. "Hey, are you going to hear Father Jeff's Trinity Sunday sermon?"

"Are you kidding? I wouldn't miss it."

After all, nothing makes for a great sermon like the finer points of Christian theology. The doctrine of the Holy Trinity is always a crowd pleaser. I think it's all the suspense that keeps people on the edge of their seats. Is it three gods? Or is it one God? How can one God have a trinity of persons, but a unity of being? "Tune in next week for the conclusion of *One in Three, and Three in One!*"

Ah, I tease theology... but theology is our friend. In fact, the doctrine of the Holy Trinity, for all of its arcane language and confusing concepts, is really just about how God has revealed God's self to us. It is about how we have come to know God. And, in fact, how we know God is really important. Of course, we know God primarily through the Bible. Now we cannot say that the Trinity is, strictly speaking, a Biblical concept. It is a theological construct that took us a few hundred years to work out. But if we go back and read the Bible with the understanding of God as a Holy Trinity, we actually find all kinds of support for that idea. Take today's Gospel for instance.

In this brief bit of words from Jesus, just five sentences, he speaks about both the Father and the Holy Spirit, which he calls the Spirit of Truth. This is a very well constructed few sentences here. Jesus has said in other places in John's Gospel how all that he has is from the Father; and even his words have been given to him from the Father. Jesus doesn't say anything

on his own. He says what his Father in heaven has told him to say. Here Jesus makes the point that, not only is all that he has from the Father, but “all that the Father has is his.” To put it another way, God the Father has given all that he has to Jesus, the Son. So, really Jesus and the Father are one.

Now, when Jesus speaks about the Spirit of truth, that will guide us into all truth, he says that the Spirit will tell us what comes, not from his own mind, but from him, from Jesus. He says, “(the Spirit) will take what is mine and declare it to you.” In a sense the Spirit will simply continue the ministry that Jesus has begun in his earthly life. The Spirit will pass along to us whatever Jesus tells it to. Having the Spirit will be like having Jesus right here with us. So, Jesus and the Spirit are one.

Jesus and God, the Father are one. Jesus and the Holy Spirit are one. Jesus has been given all things by the Father. Jesus passes on to the Spirit all that has been given to him. But wait, there’s more. Jesus tells us that the Spirit will glorify him, by passing on to us what he passes on to the Spirit. Elsewhere we have heard that Jesus glorifies the Father when he does the Father’s works, and that the Father glorifies the Son in both his crucifixion and his resurrection. So the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit seem to be glorifying each other in all of this. They are three persons who share one glory. And that is because they are one God. And that’s the Holy Trinity, in a nutshell.

Now, I know what you are thinking. *I wonder what’s for lunch.* O, come on. Some of you are thinking that. And some of you may be thinking, *So what?* So the Church understands and teaches that God is a trinity of persons with a unity of being, co-equal, co-eternal, all sharing one glory. So what? What does that have to do with my daily life? What does that have to do with me and my relationship with God and with my fellow humans? Good question.

We all want to know God, and to be known by God. But how do we do that? We know that Jesus is the true and perfect revelation of God and God's nature, but we weren't alive when Jesus walked the earth. That doesn't mean that we can't know him. We know Jesus through the witness of Scripture, but also through that dynamic Spirit of truth that he promised to guide us. It is only through the power of the Spirit that we can know Jesus. That Spirit bears witness to our spirit to make Jesus known to us. That same Spirit also searches our spirit to its very depths, and knows our hearts better than we do ourselves. As we are guided by the Holy Spirit, we come to know Jesus, God's Son. And as we come to know the Son, we come to know the Father.

So, it is really about knowing God, not knowing the doctrine of the Holy Trinity. It is about knowing, loving, worshiping, and serving God. Who is this God we claim to know and love? It is the God revealed to us by the Spirit, and revealed in the life, teaching, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus. That's who God is. That is how we come to know who God is. And that is why we celebrate Trinity Sunday every year. Now, I know what you are thinking. *I wonder if there will be donuts after church.* Come on. Some of you are thinking that. But some of you might be thinking, *I'm glad we only have Trinity Sunday once a year.* Now, I admit it doesn't have the beauty and sweetness of Christmas, nor does it have the drama and mystery of Easter, but Trinity Sunday is important too. It is important for us to be reminded from time to time about the vast mystery which is God, and how we have come to know and understand that mystery. The doctrine of the Trinity keeps us humble, as we struggle to comprehend and appreciate God. But mostly it helps us to understand our relationship with God, the Father, whom we know through the Son, in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Amen.