

### Trinity Sunday

A primary school teacher was giving an art lesson. As she wandered round the class she stopped at one young boy and said to him,

“That looks interesting what are you drawing?”

“I’m drawing God” he replied.

“But no one knows what God looks like” she said.

To this the young boy replied, “Well, they will in 5 minutes.”

I like this somewhat childlike question: “What does God look like?” For example, if I ask you to think of a mountain, you’ll immediately have an image in mind; if I ask you to think of a bridge, an image will come to mind, and if I ask you to think of a beach another image will come to mind. Now what if I ask you to think of God... what image comes to mind?

What does God look like to you?

Some people’s image of God is an old man with a white beard sitting on a chair – this is surely a comedy, Monty Python, image of God. Yet for some God is static, inactive, solitary, way up there, lonely and dull... an old man - a white beard-god sitting on a chair or throne.

Others have an image of God, who is triumphant, glorious, majestic, kingly, victorious, and conquering. This is less an image of God and more of an image of Jesus and is reflected in many Christian hymns and songs. This imagery of God is not really taken from the gospels but from elsewhere in the New Testament and from mythology. Significantly for me it is not really an image of God as presented by Jesus in the gospels.

Others have an image of God which is mostly derived from the Old Testament where God is vengeful, unforgiving (when I say unforgiving I mean doesn’t forgive unconditionally but only when conditioned to forgive in response to prayer, sacrifice or repentance). This image of God is vengeful, unforgiving, jealous, narrow, of the elect or saved but not of all, and a God who judges and condemns to hell fire without forgiveness forever.

It can be argued that each of these images is found in the Bible somewhere, some might even say that all of them contribute to the overall makeup and broad nature of the image of God.

Another image that many have of God is that of God as one made up of three, one God in three persons. This image of God is somewhat more complicated where God is said to be revealed as Father, Son and Holy Spirit – not three gods, but one God in three persons.

For many Christians this ‘Trinity’ is utterly baffling and though their faith - the Christian faith - is based upon this with creeds, confessions, hymns and songs they don’t fully understand it. For many Christians God as Trinity is their stated belief but not something they really live with on a daily basis, or contemplate or put into practise. This God in Trinity may look just as static and inactive, and just as dull and boring as the solitary old man with a white beard image, *except now there are three of them.*

What is your image of God? Is your image of God at all relevant, pertinent and immediate... as in ‘here and now’ very present? Who is this God who is present?

Some Christian traditions have images of God in their sanctuary. Other Christian traditions will have no images of God in their sanctuary. There was an outcry in the 15<sup>th</sup> century

when the Russian iconographer Roublev painted his Trinity icon. The great outcry and argument in the Russian church was that the Father and the Holy Spirit were depicted in image form when only the Son was every given to be viewed and therefore represented in image form.

I don't hold to a Roublev's static image of God or an old white bearded man on a chair, or an old man with a beard on a chair with two others, just sitting there. The image of God that I find in the gospels is the image of God I see. To me God looks like a man serving others at table, a man washing the feet of others, a man weeping for those who suffer, a man who cares for those no one cares for, a man who goes to the outcast, a man who includes the un-included, a man who loves and forgives and who loves and forgives at all cost and even at all cost to self, a man who suffers and dies for others. This God does not look victorious at all.

The image God reveals of himself in the gospels is not a stallion riding conquering victorious saviour. In the gospels we find Jesus tempted to accept glory, prestige, power and wealth yet Jesus refuses to reveal God in this way. Christians have gone on to view God in ways that Jesus never did.

While all the other Christian festivals and celebrations are focused upon celebrating God whereas Trinity Sunday has been claimed as a Sunday set aside to celebrate 'a church doctrine'. The word Trinity never appears in the Bible and was neither a word nor a theology which Paul or Peter ever used or heard of.

The word Trinity came to be coined 'invented' by Tertullian in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century. But the doctrine of the Trinity wasn't agreed upon until 325 and the council of Nicea, further consolidated at Chalcedon 451. But it is a theology that is constantly modified and even remodified by the Uniting Church. What does God look like?

My God does not look like an argument over Greek statements of belief; does not look like countless words, or theologies; and does not look like sterile lifeless commandments and laws.

My God looks like Jesus, loving and serving, serving and loving. My God looks incredibly humble: the opposite of proud, majestic, glorious and victorious.

My God often looks so unlike the God of Christian hymns, songs, art, theology and belief. Jesus reveals God's mind and heart and spirit. In his every word and action Jesus is what God looks like.