

Trinity Sunday – 12th June 2022

The Holy Spirit as the love binding together the Trinity

I have a friend who believes that all parties need people who act as glue. They may not be particularly beautiful or exciting, but they will listen and encourage, laugh at jokes, dance with those left on the edge, and in their presence people will feel a little more brilliant, a little more attractive and enjoy themselves a little more and so the party is lit up. Such people don't recognise their own talent. They are simply enjoying the party. And I suppose my sermon today could be subtitled, 'The Holy Spirit as superglue.'

Lancelot Andrewes, bishop of Winchester and then Ely in the 16th and 17th centuries, loved a good party. It was said of him that he celebrated Christmas Day every day, rejoicing daily that we are born into a world in which Christ chose to be incarnate. In a sermon the bishop preached before king James I in 1606 he spoke of the Holy Spirit as 'The Spirit of spirits, the third person in Trinity – the very essential unity, love, and love knot of the two persons, the Father and the Son. And sent to be the union, love and love knot of the two natures in Christ; even of God with man.' That's quite a lot of theology in one sentence. But I think Andrewes shares my theory of glue.

The Holy Spirit, he says, is 'the unity, love and love knot of the Father and the Son.' The Holy Spirit ties together the Father and the Son in a bond of love. More than that though, the Holy Spirit **is** the bond of love, the glue binding them together. In a marriage ceremony I like to wrap the hands of bride and groom together, lightly knotting my stole around their hands before proclaiming loudly and joyfully, 'Those whom God has joined together, let no one put asunder.' Like a married couple the Father and Son are so closely bound together that Christ can say in the Gospel, 'All that belongs to the Father is mine.'

But not only does Andrewes describe the Holy Spirit as the 'love knot' between the Father and Son, he says the Holy Spirit is also the bond or love knot, the glue if you like, between the two natures of Christ. Christ's heavenly nature, the second person of the Trinity was in the beginning with God. Without discarding his heavenly nature at the incarnation he took on human nature as the son of Mary and of Joseph the carpenter of Nazareth. Those two natures are bound together in the love knot of the Holy Spirit. So there is a human being, with wounded hands and feet, in heaven who is the second person of the Trinity. I'm sorry if this sounds complex – Andrewes explained it all much better in just one sentence. In fact he said more, and you can miss this if you don't listen carefully. He said the Holy Spirit is also the love knot, holding together God and human beings, that is, us.

Let's just pause there and absorb that. I think it's what Paul is pointing to in the passage we heard from his letter to the Romans when he says, 'we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand.' The grace in which we stand is being invited into the love of the Trinity.

That love between the Father and the Son, between the divine and human natures of Christ, and between Trinitarian God and human beings is delightfully, lightly sketched in Proverbs 8 in the vignette of Wisdom as child playing unselfconsciously at the side of the creator of the universe, rejoicing in God's presence. And the rejoicing is reciprocal. The King James version reads, 'I was daily his delight,' meaning God's delight. Thomas Aquinas believed that wisdom has to begin with the gift of wonder. To be wise is to have an understanding of God and God's creation, such that we recognise in awe and love that both are beyond our understanding.

Is Wisdom the Holy Spirit? Or is the passage a prophecy of the Son? Scholars ponder and argue and I don't know the answer. But the delight and rejoicing in the reciprocal love between God and Wisdom feels like the 'love knot' characteristic of the Holy Spirit. And perhaps that understanding of the Holy Spirit as the love tying together the persons of the Trinity makes some sense of John 16.

'The Spirit will not speak on his own but will speak only what he hears.' What does the Spirit hear? Love. Jesus says, 'He will glorify me because it is from me he will receive what he will make known to you.' What is it that the Spirit makes known? Love. The Holy Spirit as the bond of love between Father and Son makes known the love of Father and Son and Holy Spirit to us to us and knots us all into their love.