*The LCA provides this sermon edited for lay-reading, with thanks to the original author.*

Sermon for Holy TrinityText: Matthew 28:16-20

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ.

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

It's common for us to begin our worship services in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the holy Spirit. When we do that, we're dealing with the overflowing love, life and faithfulness of God. This familiar Trinitarian opening to our public worship echoes the name that was spoken together with our name when we were baptised. Following the words of Jesus, which we heard in today's gospel lesson, we baptise people in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the holy Spirit.

Whenever we join together for public worship, we are gathered as the people of the Triune God, people linked by God to the gracious will and works of God. This is a profound reality.

We're people who belong to the Triune God as the result of God's wonderful choice. That's who we are. We remember who we are when we say our morning and evening prayers, making the sign of the cross and saying 'in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the holy Spirit'. We remember who we are when we pray the Lord's Prayer. We remember who we are when we praise God through the words of the Apostles' Creed, or the Nicene Creed.

These regular reminders of who we are and whose we are very helpful for us. That's because there's a lot going on in and around us that works to contradict the truth of our identity. The current circumstances of our lives might challenge our relationship as God's children. The truth is that God has lovingly and graciously claimed us and made us part of the body of Christ through baptism into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the holy Spirit.

That joyful state of affairs provides us with a good way of approaching the subject of the Trinity. We can tell our story.

Today, Trinity Sunday, is not really a day to get all caught up in fanciful explanations and half-baked philosophy about God. We will never come up with words that can explain the Trinity. We don't really have the words, or the experience, or the ideas to talk about the Triune God in an abstract way. That would be something like an earthbound creature like an ant trying to explain and describe the flight of a magpie. We won't try to do any explaining.

Does that mean that we have nothing to say about the Trinity then? On the contrary, we have a great deal to say. What we have to say is not philosophical explanations, but rather we simply retell the story of God's boundless love.

We can retell the story of God's boundless love, which has always nourished and cared for us and has also sought us out and claimed us. Since we're baptised people of God, we're part of the story and have the story to tell.

We can tell the story of God's boundless, overflowing love. That's what the Trinity is about. We can tell the story of God's faithfulness and patience. We can tell of God's reluctance to punish and overwhelming desire to forgive and save people, who are hell-bent on their own destruction. We can tell about Jesus, our Saviour. This is all part of our story, and we can tell our story, which is in reality talking about and praising the Trinity.

Telling the story of God's love is fantastic. The story of God's love is so fantastic that it's most of the reason why the author of this sermon became a pastor. He writes:

“You might know that I was fortunate enough to grow up in a very good home. All my life I've had the joyful blessing of loving parents. During my childhood, we said grace before each meal and said a prayer of thanks afterwards as well. We had regular devotions. We joined with our local congregation for worship each Sunday. You could note that I had a very good grounding in the faith. I knew the Small Catechism by heart. I must have known a lot of the story.

Yet, in an odd way, I hadn't really heard the story. There was some kind of gap, and I thought being a Christian was mostly about obeying the commandments, doing the right thing, and being quick in my heart to judge people who weren't. As I recall, my thinking was roughly along the lines that God forgave my sins so that I could continue trying to keep the commandments. The focus was largely on myself and my efforts.

Now, I'm sure that the gospel was being preached to me repeatedly. I'm sure that I was told the story of God's boundless love many, many times.

However, it's funny how long it can be before it takes hold, before we dare to trust it. It's so easy for people to slip back into trusting self. That's why the church's main agenda item is to tell the story. We teach that what makes church ‘church’ is the proclamation of the gospel and the administration of the sacraments. It's about telling the story of God's boundless love and allowing it to do its work in people.

One day the penny dropped for me. The holy Spirit had clearly been working long and hard. By the grace of God I realised that the story of God's boundless love is my story. I think it was a retelling of, and some teaching around, the parable we usually call the prodigal son, when that happened.

It was as though I heard something fresh and new. I realised my story is not about me being good enough or faithful enough for God, but rather it's about God, who is unswervingly faithful, gracious and merciful to me. Now that's something that's really worth talking about. That's when being a Pastor made any sense at all. In truth, I have no desire to be a moral policeman, and my heart for people is still very much a work in progress, but the story of God's unfailing love is so worth telling.”

We all have stories that tell God's story. The holy Spirit is at work in us so we can tell it in our own way. We will always be talking about the Trinity although we may seldom, if ever, use that word. I suspect we never need to use the word 'Trinity' when we're telling the story of God's saving love. That's because we'll be talking about Jesus.

We can tell people that we're baptised, that we're rebellious sinners, whom Jesus has saved and redeemed and made his very own at the cost of his life. We can tell people that God loved us, and the world, so much that he sent his only Son to save us. Jesus died for me, and for you, to set us free so that we can live with him forever.

We really have stories to tell. We can tell people about how close and personal God is. Jesus is with us always and we're especially aware of his good and gracious presence when he makes himself known in word and sacrament. The holy Spirit prays with us and for us, so that we can pray as if we're conversing with a dear parent. We can tell of the hope and joy that we have, which is the work of the holy Spirit in us.

When Jesus sent the disciples to make disciples, he sent them with God's story and their own. Even though some doubted they were sent to make disciples by baptising in God's name and teaching. That was able to work, the church was able continue through history, because God is here. Jesus is graciously and mercifully present with his church, always ready to forgive and restore according to his promise.

We're not alone when we live our lives and tell our story. We have each other and we have God. In holy baptism God has brought us together so that we all live, and have our identity, in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the holy Spirit. We tell the stories of dearly loved children of God. We have much to tell about the Father, Son and holy Spirit who embraces people with such wondrous, faithful and boundless love.

The peace of God which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.