Trinity Sunday

Archbishop Geoffrey Smith

I know today is called Trinity Sunday, but I tend to prefer to call it ‘God’ Sunday. Now that the Easter season is completed, we can look back and reflect on the way God has been revealed to the world in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus, and the Holy Spirit who Jesus describes as His spirit. Trinity Sunday is almost a summing up, a concluding Sunday as we look forward to continuing as disciples of Jesus, sharing in his mission in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Sometimes it feels like Trinity Sunday is about mathematics, 3 in 1 and 1 in 3 and all that, but Trinity Sunday isn’t about mathematics it’s about mission. Trinity Sunday is about sharing in the mission of God. Getting on with it.

The gospel reading this morning from Matthew’s gospel, one of the four commissionings in the gospels, puts it plainly. Jesus starts by saying to his disciples, “all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me”, and then says: ‘Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always to the end of the age”.

Jesus commissions the disciples to go and make more disciples. A disciple of Jesus is to learn from Jesus. To be shaped in their life and attitudes and priorities to be more and more like Jesus. To continue Jesus’ work. To be witnesses for him. Jesus’ mission was to share the mission of God. So that’s what his disciples do.

The stunning thing is that we are called to be disciples of Jesus. We all received that call when we were baptised, no matter what age we were, or in what Christian denomination we were baptised, and we all said yes to that call to be disciples of Jesus when we were confirmed. So this is what we are on about. We were not only called to be believers, or church members. We were called to be disciples of Jesus.

And disciples of Jesus are called to follow him and to share his work, his mission, which is to serve the mission of God.

God’s mission has been described in various ways, but a really good description comes from the line in the Lord’s Prayer: ‘your kingdom come your will be done on earth as it is in heaven’.

God’s mission, Gods project, Gods aim if you like, is to bring heaven to earth. Another description of God’s mission is ‘the healing of all things’. God will bring this about, but God calls the church to participate, to share in this work. That’s our purpose-to share in the goal, in the project, in the mission of God.

A way to think about the kingdom of God is to imagine what things would be like on earth if heaven came to earth. So for instance, if heaven came to earth we would know God perfectly. God would be recognised as God by everyone. There would be no more death or sickness. There would be no more war. Everyone would have enough. No one would go without. Everyone would be treated fairly and honestly and respectfully. The earth and all creation would be healed.

That’s Gods mission-to bring that state of things to be, and that’s what we pray for every time we pray the Lord’s prayer-your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. The purpose of the church is to share with God in that mission. To do what we can do make that future situation real now.

That’s why we evangelise-we tell people about Jesus, his death and resurrection, the forgiveness of sins and the hope of resurrection that comes through trust in him. That’s why we tell people about Gods aim-what the future will be like. The future of the world is ultimately not going to be gloom and destruction. The future of the world is going to be wholeness and healing and new creation. Heaven and earth joined. There may well be times of difficulty and suffering on the way, but ultimately heaven will come to earth.

The reason we help people in need. The reason why we try to welcome everyone. The reason why we do all we can to look after the environment. The reason why we do all those things is because we are sharing in the mission of God, and bringing Gods future into the present.

One of the challenges for the Anglican Church in Australia at the moment is a general lack of clarity about what our purpose is. We have found it very difficult to move on from the hey-day of the 1950’s and 60’s, and we tend to look back either to wish things were like that now, or to try to continue today what we did back then because we don’t know what else to do.

The other big challenge for us given the society in which we live is consumerism. That is the air we breathe. We are bombarded by advertising in all sorts of forms telling us we need more or different or lots of things and offering us an incredible choice. What we want we can have. The church can be affected by consumerism too. The church can become a purveyor of spiritual experience, and we church members can become religious or spiritual consumers. We say it’s all about God. But actually the decisions we make show it’s all about us.

The tendency for us is to come to church because of what we get out of it. We like the music. We like the preaching. We like the church building. We like the people. We like the coffee-although that's not usually a risk in many Anglican churches!

Church is not supposed to be about us and what suits us or what we like. Church is supposed to be a first aid station and a staging post. Church is supposed to be a place where those who are seeking God, or who are suffering from the impact of the worlds injustices come to find the healing that is in Jesus Christ.

Church is supposed to be a staging post in that when we gather the idea is that we are strengthened to go out. Equipped to live as disciples of Jesus away from this building. Recharged to share in the mission of God. What we do on Sundays and other times when we gather is not an end in itself but a time to encourage and strengthen us to do what we can do to help others know the love of God in Jesus, and do what we can do to see God's will on earth as it is done in heaven. That's the point. That's the purpose of the church. That's our purpose.

To fulfill that purpose we need to be well connected with Jesus. Continually filled with the Holy Spirit. There are a number of ways that are part of that happening. Having an open and expectant heart is important. Wanting to be connected with God, to know God, to be used by God in Gods mission. Being prepared to say 'yes' to that call.

Second, we connect with God through the sacraments and especially through Holy Communion. God does strengthen our connection with him as we faithfully receive communion.

Third, through prayer and reflection on the scriptures. The challenge is that some of us find prayer difficult. We may never have been taught to pray. We may find it difficult to read and reflect on the scriptures. Maybe we have tried in the past but we find the Bible difficulty to understand. That may well be the case. But there is help available. If you have your phone…look where you get your apps and find one called Lectio 365 – it's free – try it for a week – there's nothing to lose.

> *The Trinity, in other words, God, is not about maths. God is about mission. And Gods church is about mission too. God's mission, and we share in that, guided and enabled by the Holy Spirit. May we reflect that goal and purpose in all we do. Amen.*