

Sermon Isaiah 6:1-8 & John 3:1-17  
Holy Trinity B  
May 27, 2018  
Grace Lutheran

**As I begin this morning, a bit of an unusual request:  
If you like mysteries, either in book or in film,  
Kindly raise your hand.**

**(Okay, a good handful. Thank you.)**

**I imagine that those of you who raised, or thought about raising,  
Your hands like mysteries for a handful of various reasons.**

**Perhaps you enjoy the suspense – wondering if each new character  
Is somehow integral to the central plot.**

**Perhaps you feel a great sense of satisfaction when you get to the end  
And the mystery unfolded is exactly what or who  
You knew it would be the whole time.**

**Maybe it's the thrill of the chase,  
Your rooting for the identifiable protagonist,  
Your journey to exotic destinations as the story develops,  
Or maybe you just like a good puzzle to solve.**

**Any or all or more of those might be the reason for you,  
But as I thought more about mystery and society as a whole,  
I started wondering if the “collective we” of humanity  
Enjoys fictional mysteries so much because there are  
So few actual mysteries left in the world.**

**While we may still marvel that a 367-ton Boeing 747  
Can actually get off the ground and traverse entire oceans,  
Simply learn about aerodynamics and mystery solved.**

**While we may still marvel at the sheer scale of our solar system,  
We've made rockets that sent a camera millions of miles away  
To take and send back Pluto's glamour shot.  
Astronomy + Chemistry = Mystery solved.**

**Many of you asked how I succeeded  
In unpacking the mysterious art of fence-building.  
Simple. YouTube.**

**We can know the gender of unborn children.  
We can fix our own cars.  
We can locate ourselves to within a meter from space.  
We can access generations of data from  
Devices that fit inside our pockets.  
And we can finally know the breakdown of breeds  
Of our mixed-breed four-legged friends.**

**Through science, thought, observation, technology, and curiosity,  
We have unfolded many of life's mysteries.**

**And because humanity is on such a roll,  
Many of my preaching colleagues around the country,  
Myself included, are and have been incredibly tempted  
To unfold the mystery of the Holy Trinity  
On this Holy Trinity Sunday.**

**To find the perfect analogy that will help us understand  
How three in one and one in three is possible.**

To somehow bend the math, to crunch the calculus,  
To discern the geometry of the divine in triplicate...  
I mean in unity...that is in triplicate.

And not just preachers, really, we're all tempted and want to do this.

Unfolding mysteries makes us feel good...  
Like we have accomplished something.  
Like we have gotten to the end of the book  
And find out that we were right all along.  
Like we have succeeded in gaining mastery  
Over the world around us.

Theologians and pastors and scholars and councils and committees  
Have been trying to pin down the Trinity  
Ever since...well...ever since the first Christ followers  
Began proclaiming that they were Christ followers.

Some of those theologians and pastors and scholars  
Were told they were wrong by councils and committees,  
Branded as heretics whose ideas were no longer aligned  
With the majority or accepted view.

So, if history has taught us anything,  
Perhaps it is that some things are just better left mysterious.

How does a burning coal carried by a six-winged figure  
Blot out guilt and sin and prepare a person for service?

How does a voice break strong trees  
And cause such joy that entire countries skip around  
Like yearling livestock?

How does baptismal water carry us out of death and into life...  
Joining us together as brothers and sisters  
Who are loved by a love never before seen?

What are the exact proportions of spirit, belief, and resurrection  
That yield eternal life?

How do simple things like grains and grapes  
Become life-giving food and drink  
Surrounded by the very presence of the one  
Who invites us up there in the first place?

While those who sit in a many-ton metal tube  
Might appreciate understanding how that tube continues to fly,  
And while we are right to be thankful that at least *someone*  
Knows how to keep that metal tube flying,  
Perhaps we can be of the understanding  
That God does not rely on our understanding  
To keep on doing the things  
That God is really good at doing.

As Christians we gather around these holy mysteries  
Not because we know exactly what to expect,  
But because of the times  
We've witnessed the unexpected.  
Not because we know exactly who or what Trinity is,  
But because we wonder how Trinity  
Will show up in our lives today.  
Not because we know exactly *how* we are fed and forgiven,  
But because we know *why* we are fed and forgiven:  
Because God so loved and keeps on loving the world.  
And that means you. That means me.  
It means us.

**One need not unfold the mystery of Trinity  
To understand the most important aspect of Trinity.**

**The very nature of the God we worship is a nature of relationship.**

**The God we worship together is a God who is together.  
And as a result our lives are molded and shaped together.**

**We are better together, faithful together.  
Even when we cry together and mourn together.  
When meet together, welcome together, and grow together.  
While we discern and deliberate and minister together.**

**As people of the cross, as brothers and sisters in Christ,  
We are transformed into people  
Who live joyfully in the mystery  
That our God (who may never be fully explained)  
Is alive and at work in ways  
We have seen, tasted, touched, and heard,  
And also in ways that may never be fully explained.**

**There is nothing wrong with our trying to understand  
The nature of Trinity.  
After all, inquiring minds want to know,  
Even if a bad analogy crops up here and there.**

**As we continue to celebrate  
The indwelling of the Spirit at Pentecost, however,  
Maybe we can give our sleuthing a break,  
And likewise dwell  
In the holy mystery of Trinity.**