

After 10 weeks of homeschooling during lockdown, my daughter was glad to see our 6 year old granddaughter go back to school, because she said home education had highlighted just how bad she was at maths!

In fact our granddaughter said to her, mummy why don't you know this, its year one work, I'm 6 and you're 33!

Would you like me to explain it to you?

Where maths is concerned; like my daughter the Church also has a bit of a problem.

So listen again to those words from 2 Corinthians that were read to us earlier.

“The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.”

You see in this passage we're reminded of the fact that there's one God who is Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

And because it's Trinity Sunday we're going to need our thinking caps on this morning,

You see the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are all God; but there aren't 3 god's.

There's only one God who is 3 persons!

And if that seems like a really big maths problem to you, that's because it is!

You see even my daughter would know that 3 divided by 1 isn't 1, it's 3!

As a result of this mathematical conundrum, people have tried to be really helpful by explaining the Trinity using different illustrations to help us understand a seemingly impossible maths question.

And maybe you've heard these illustration before, you might've even used them yourself.

So for example some people have tried to explain the by saying the Trinity is a bit like a boiled egg.

You see an egg has a shell, the white, and a yolk, 3 different parts that make one egg.

And so people say if you want to understand the Trinity just look at an egg, 3 in one, problem solved!

But you know the problem isn't solved because there's an issue with this particular illustration.

You see the shell, the yolk and the white, are only parts of an egg.

But the Father, Son and Holy Spirit aren't 3 separate parts of God; no each person of the Trinity is God!

And there's only one God not 3!

OK, so let's try a different illustration that might help.

So just think of a glass of water for a second.

Water's liquid isn't it, but if you freeze it, it becomes solid ice, and if you boil it, it turns to steam.

And so water can be 3 different things can't it, liquid, ice, and steam, and yet they're all water.

But if we use water as an illustration to describe the Trinity we still have a problem.

You see although water can be liquid, ice and steam, it can't be all 3 at the same time can it; it has to change, by either getting hot or cold.

So water can only be one thing at once, it can't be all three at exactly the same time.

But within the Trinity, God is always at exactly the same time, 3 persons who is 1

God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, who doesn't change from one person to the other at different times; but remains the same.

It's mind blowing isn't it!

And if you're anything like me I imagine you're getting a bit of a headache.

Now if none of these examples help; how *can* we explain the Trinity?

Well guess what, we can't.

You see God is more than our minds can grasp.

So listen to this that I read in a sermon just the other day:

We can't know how God's life works, and when we say that God is three-in-one that's not meant to help us tie God down. It doesn't mean we get to say, 'Oh yes, now I get it, now I see what it all means, now it all makes sense to me'.

No, it is not meant to help us put God in a box. In fact, it's meant to help us not to put God in a box. It's meant to point us to ways in which there is more to God than we might have thought, more to God's life, more to God's love, more to the way God shares God's life with us.

And although illustrations to explain the Trinity have probably been used with the best intentions, they can actually lead to some wrong ideas about who God is.

So for example as a result of trying to work the Trinity out, some people, have taught that the Holy Spirit is just a created being or an impersonal force, a bit like electricity.

Other's have taught that Jesus is only human and was adopted by God in a special way at his baptism.

Some people have even said that God appears in different forms at different times;

so at one point he might appear as Jesus,  
and at another the Holy Spirit.

Instead of being one God in 3 persons!

And so you see when we try to work the  
Trinity out we can be led down some blind  
ally's.

And as hard as it is; the Bible teaches, that  
the Father is not the Son; the Son's not the  
Holy Spirit; and the Holy Spirit is not the  
Father; and yet each person is equally, fully  
and completely God, who isn't three god's,  
but one God.

And the fact that it can't be worked out logically might be really disappointing for some of you, because you like to have things sorted out in your head.

But you know when we think about the Trinity we have to accept that we quickly reach the limits of our understanding.

Which can actually be quite reassuring; because A), to know that God is beyond our mental grasp, shows that no human could've come up with the idea, and B), if I could work God out he wouldn't be God; and he certainly be worth committing my life to.

Now having said all that; although the Trinity might seem really complicated and leave us with lots of questions; there are some things that we *can* know.

And ironically I'm going to mention 3!

So number 1, I'm sure we're all familiar with the idea that God is love aren't we.

But have you ever thought what that means in terms of the Trinity.

So here's another mind bender for you, the Bible says that God is the uncreated creator of everything, in other words there's never been a time when God didn't exist.

But for God to be love, means that he could never have existed as a solitary individual before creation came into being.

There must've always been someone for God to direct his love towards; because you can't love without having an object of affection.

And that's really important, because without the Trinity, we could easily come to the conclusion, that being all alone in the universe, God only created us to have something to love, that would hopefully love him back.

As a result he becomes a needy deity who craves our devotion and affection.

But the Trinity shows us that God didn't just make us to fulfil a need that was lacking within himself.

No instead he creates us out of the overflow of his loving character and personality, that's always existed within the Godhead, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, who live in a perfect and mutually loving relationship, that's now shared with us.

Isn't that amazing.

You see God's love is only possible because of the eternal relationship that he has within himself as a divine community.

So love isn't something that's created, it comes from the very character and nature of God, *who* is love.

Secondly the Trinity shows us that God is personal, and can be known.

In other words he's not distant, aloof, or detached from us.

Now at this point other monotheistic religions, like Islam, would disagree, because you see for a muslim, God is so distinct,

unique, and completely separate from his creation, we can't really know him.

But our God is one God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, that means we can have a personal relationship with him; because he's made himself known to us in the person of Jesus Christ, who entered into human history.

And then thirdly and very briefly, The Trinity teaches us about God's work in salvation and how each person within the Trinity has a distinct and specific role.

And so to put it simply the Bible says that its God the Father who made us and spoke the whole of creation into being.

It's God the Son, who enters our broken world to rescue us from sin and death; opens the way to heaven, and reveals the Father to us; and it's God the Holy Spirit who applies to us everything that Jesus achieved in his life death and resurrection, as he lives and works in our lives to change us, and make us more like Christ.

And so that's the Holy Trinity, the maths problem we'll never solve: One God in 3 persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit; who in spite of being above anything we can

humanly comprehend, is a Father, who loves us from all eternity, because he is love and who makes himself known to us in the person of Jesus Christ; who gives us the Holy Spirit to be our helper, guide and comforter.

