

Trinity Sunday is one of those tricky Sundays that I'm going to do an end-run around to tell you the truth.

I'll tell you what I'm thinking here.

John's Gospel today speaks about where heaven meets earth, and I like what the Celtic spirituality says about thin places where the divine creeps into our day-to-day life.

But these thin spaces don't have to be geographic.

They can be a situation, or in the case of John's Gospel, the embodiment of heaven, the embodiment of God, the word made flesh in our midst.

So as Jesus tries to unpack this for Nicodemus, I invite you to think about that, where heaven meets earth, and how a spirit often generates life within that meeting.

I think that would be a lot easier than a 62-page explication of the doctrine of the Trinity based on Athanasius and other people.

Oh, I know you were looking forward to that.

The GOSPEL

The Holy Gospel according to St. John, the third chapter.

Now, there was a Pharisee named Nicodemus, a leader of the Jewish people.

He came to Jesus by night and said to him, "Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God, for nobody could do the signs that you do apart from the presence of God."

And Jesus answered him, "Very truly I tell you.

No one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above."

And Nicodemus asked Jesus, "How can anyone be born after having grown old?

Can one enter a second time into the mother's womb and be born?"

Jesus answered, "Very truly I tell you.

No one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and spirit.

What is born of the flesh is flesh, and what is born of the spirit is spirit."

Do not be astonished that I say to you, "You must be born from above."

The wind blows where it chooses, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes.

So it is with everyone who is born of the spirit.

And Nicodemus said to Jesus, "How can these things be?"

Jesus answered him, "Are you a teacher of Israel, and yet you do not understand these things?"

"Very truly I tell you.

We speak of what we know and testify to what we have seen, and yet you do not receive our testimony."

If I have told you about earthly things, and you do not believe, "How can you believe if I tell you about heavenly things?"

No one has ascended into heaven except the one who descended from heaven, the Son of Man.

And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.

For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish, but have eternal life.

Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.

Those who believe in him are not condemned, but those who do not believe are condemned already because they have not believed in the name of the only Son of God.

And this is the judgment that the light has come into the world, and the people love darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil.

For all who do evil hate the light and do not come to the light so that their deeds may not be exposed.

But those who do what is true come to the light so that it may be clearly seen that their deeds have been done in God.

The gospel of our Lord.

The SERMON

Grace and peace to you from the one who was, who is, and who is to come.

Earlier I asked a group of people if they were familiar with the phrase "Winds of Change" and it didn't seem as familiar as I thought it would be.

So, maybe it is a new expression to you.

As an amateur meteorologist, well not really, but I have a difficult time thinking of any wind that does not either announce change or bring change.

As an amateur linguist, sort of.

It seems to me that "Winds of Change" is a phrase that is redundant.

There is no change when the wind blows.

Jesus likens the spirit of God to the wind.

Don't know where it comes from, don't know where it goes, but it just shows up where it wants to show up.

That's the BRSV, the bar-revised standard version of John chapter 3, by the way.

And it seems that this wind spirit of God, wherever and whenever it blows, is not content, leave things as they are.

Consider creation.

A mighty wind confronts the chaos and the darkness and order and beauty and creation come from that.

The spirit at Pentecost allows people to hear language, their own language, and to hear the good news of God.

So, you see what I mean about the spirit of God not being particularly interested in leaving things the way they are and untouched, the winds of change, I guess.

As Jesus speaks about spirit to a very befuddled Nicodemus, he speaks about not only birth of the spirit, but about where he comes from and where he goes to, and that this promised spirit, among many, many things, teaches us to remember what Jesus taught.

And it continues to teach us.

In anticipation of the council meeting that just about everybody in this room will be attending today, I'd like to offer a couple thoughts related to where we've already been.

This spirit that reminds us and that teaches us is the one that empowers us to be prophets.

You didn't think of yourself as being a prophet when you woke up this morning and had that bowl of rice crispies in your coffee, but you are because a prophet is not a predictor of the future, a prophet is one who speaks out the word of the Lord.

Last week we talked a bit about that, that such speaking out is done in our actions.

Now I would like to go back to somebody who knows a thing or two about prophets.

Professor Dr. Walter Brogeman, an expert in the Hebrew scriptures, and for my money probably the best one out there.

He announces that the church has three prophetic tasks.

The first is to speak the truth in a world that lives in illusion.

The second is to grieve in a world that practices denial.

And the third is to live hope in a world that lives in despair.

To speak the truth.

To grieve when grieving needs to be done.

And to live hope in a world of despair.

For those of you who will be not at the council meeting, this is what I'm going to tell people there.

That's the church's job.

That is the job of the faith community.

To speak truth where there's illusion.

To grieve when there's denial.

And to live hope when there is despair.

May that capricious spirit of God blow right in and empower us to do that kind of preaching.

And may that same spirit blow right in and empower us to practice that thing that we aspire to preach.

Amen.