

Stephen Shaver  
Episcopal Church of the Incarnation, Santa Rosa, CA  
June 7, 2020  
Year A, Trinity Sunday, Revised Common Lectionary  
[Genesis 1:1-2:4a](#)  
[2 Corinthians 13:11-13](#)  
[Matthew 28:16-20](#)  
[Psalm 8](#)

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Jesus had been crucified.

I know we know this already. But let us dwell on it, just a bit, before we turn back to resurrection, and glory, and joy.

Jesus had been crucified. He was bruised and beaten. We use church language like *passion* and *Calvary* that can distance us from the reality. We speak of Jesus's suffering. But he didn't just suffer; he was made to suffer. Men who worked for the government hit him with their weapons. He was arrested and brutalized. And then he was killed. His body was left out in public for hours, until people who loved him were allowed to come and tend to it.

We need to start there, with this human being and his vulnerable body. A body, let us state, that was not white, although so much of our art still shows him that way. This was a first-century Middle Eastern Jewish man with a brown-skinned body. And while race and ethnicity didn't work exactly the same in that place and time as they do in ours, he was certainly a member of an oppressed people. And he was perceived as a threat by people with power, and he was killed for it.

Now let's come back to the resurrection part. His friends, some of whom had tended to his body, more of whom had fled the scene in the reasonable fear that the same thing would happen to them, were grieving, although the wider world wasn't paying much attention. And then the women, the tomb, the angel, the earthquake, and even an encounter with the living Jesus himself—only for the women—the men who ran away haven't seen him yet. They've just received this message to go to Galilee, to a certain mountain. And there they meet him, as he promised. And he says: "All authority in heaven and on earth is given to me." And he says a phrase we've never heard before in this whole gospel story. "The Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit."

Today is Trinity Sunday, a day when we celebrate the church's faith in a God who is Three in One and One in Three. Sometimes it can be hard for people to get excited about a feast day that's about not a saint with an interesting story, nor an event

like the baptism of Christ or the ascension, but a doctrine. Doctrine is a word that gets a bad rap sometimes. It simply means, “teaching.” A doctrine is something the church teaches, something Christians believe is true. But truth isn’t just an abstraction. Truth, if it’s really true, is as real as a bruised body, as real as friendship, as real as grief. Because life is not an abstraction, and human beings are not abstractions.

Those first friends of Jesus emerged, reeling, from the most startling events in history. And they looked for ways to talk about their experience. The one they loved was alive again. Not only alive but alive in power, the power of God, the life of God. He was a person like them and also he was more; he was the Lord. He was the Son of God. He was the Word of God. He *was* God—not God just the same as the God they already knew and worshiped, the one Jesus called Abba, Father, but God nonetheless, one with God, God in the fully realized pattern of a fully human life. A vulnerable life, with a body that was beaten and killed; let us not forget that part. And as if that weren’t enough, they found themselves also filled with God: God empowering them to do new and bold things, God leading them to follow new promptings, God at work to bring people together across unimaginable divisions. God the Holy Spirit.

The doctrine of the Trinity comes straight out of the messy lived experience of real people scrambling to know and love and follow God. The Nicene Creed, which we say every Sunday, is like the church’s lab notebook—the compilation of notes on God that Christians put together over the first four centuries. The doctrine of the Trinity is the compiled record of generations upon generations of friends of Jesus finding words for their experience, mapped out and gradually becoming more and more systematic, but always arising out of the real world, the world God made, where human beings with human bodies live and love and suffer and rise.

God loves that real world. God loves it so much that the eternal Word of God who was one with the Father from the beginning decided to be one of us. A person in the real world, with a body that ate and drank, a body that felt pleasure and pain. A body that was brutalized and killed. A body that was glorified. A body that is given to us as living bread, the bread of the Eucharist which we hunger for in this season when we can’t share it together. And yet even now that body is still in us because we are part of it, we were grafted into it when we were baptized in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

God loves human beings and human bodies. God raised human beings and human bodies to a new kind of dignity and glory by taking on our nature. And because of that love and that dignity, God cries out in anger when human beings and their bodies are violated and brutalized. Human beings like George Floyd, or Breonna Taylor, or Ahmaud Arbery, perceived as threats by people with power, and killed for it.

The doctrine of the Trinity isn't about abstract speculation. It's about the real world. Right now as this country continues to be rocked by the aftermath of the death of George Floyd and the uprising of protests against police violence and racial injustice, I believe the Holy Trinity is calling us, and particularly those of us who are white, to repent and transform our hearts and work toward the transformation of our society.

To transform our justice and policing systems so that black and brown children of God are as safe as white ones walking down their streets or sitting in their homes. To transform our economic and healthcare systems so that black and brown children of God are no longer getting infected and dying from COVID-19, or dirty water, or chemical-filled neighborhoods at rates drastically above their white neighbors. Loving God means loving all those whom God loves in the real world that God made, and then came to live in.

This is work the Spirit sets before us as part of the Jesus Movement in this place and time: a movement that in every place and time has been about love, and healing, and setting free, in the name of the One who is with us always, to the close of the age.