



So you Thought you knew God?

TRINITY SUNDAY

O Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth! You have set your glory above the heavens. When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, what is man that you are mindful of him, the son of man that you care for him? Psalm 8:1,3,4 (NIV)

If you were playing Jeopardy, and one of the categories was GOD, would you win all the questions in that category? Are you an intellectual giant about God?

If someone was to ask you questions about God, like: “Where is God?” “How do you know that God exists?” “What’s God like?” Would you be able to give satisfactory answers?

If you feel inadequate trying to explain who God is and what He’s like, then join the club. Let’s admit it, there is so much about God that we don’t know, because we can’t know about God the same way we know about any other person in our world.

- We can’t touch him.
- We can’t say how big he is because we don’t know what to measure.
- We can’t see him.
- If we wanted to take a photo of God we don’t know where to point the camera.
- We can’t knock on his door and have morning coffee with God at his home.
- We can’t feel the presence of God because we are never too sure if we are only feeling

our own emotions. · We can't imagine what God is like because we always end up using human pictures, giving him human qualities so that He makes sense to our small human minds. · We can't think like God because there is so much that God does that we just can't understand.

There is A LOT about God that is beyond our ability to know! So to deal with the mystery and awesomeness of God, people have often tried to reduce Him down to our size. That's why some people refer to him as a buddy, a friend. Others think of God only as a wonder worker who steps in to help us out of a pinch. Some people believe God has the same weaknesses as we have – like pride, and losing His temper every once in a while. Others view God as a nameless powerful being who is above the world somewhere out there, and He plays with people's lives the same way as a cat plays with a toy mouse.

What has happened is that we people have turned God to be like us.

As humans, creatures of God, we can't even begin to imagine what God, our Creator, is like. We are restricted to describing God with our own earthly words. So we can only express what a heavenly God is like in the vaguest of terms.

This is the mystery of God, the great God, the only God who is three persons in one God, who refuses to be categorized or labeled, - God who is far bigger and greater than we could ever imagine, who existed before anything at all was made.

The early Christians started talking about a Triune God. This wasn't to make God more logical and understandable to human ways of thinking. Instead, the idea of the Trinity *INTENSIFIED* the mystery and awesomeness of God.

The first Christians saw that Jesus had a unique relationship with the Father, and that the Holy Spirit had a unique relationship with the Father and the Son. The early Christians stated as clear as they could, what they read in God's Word, the Bible -- that Jesus Christ is true God, equal with the Father, and that the Holy Spirit is God, equal with the Father and the Son.

The Psalm writer could see that God is majestic, magnificent, glorious, impressive, awe-inspiring. Psalm 8 says, "**O Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth! You have set your glory above the heavens**" (Ps 8:1). He looked at the stars and the moon, and these days we could go further and add galaxies, quasars, and black holes. As the psalm writer looked at the wonder of the world, and sky, and stars above, he could only conclude that these must have been made by a great God.

Maybe you have done the same. You looked at the magnificent colors of a sunset, the intricate structure of a beautiful flower, the mountains, the green rolling fields, a star filled sky -- and you have said, "There, *THAT'S* proof that there is a God. Anyone who wants to see evidence of God's existence doesn't need to look any further."

But seeing God in the universe can only be seen with the eyes of faith. Believers who already know God can see that the wonders of nature are signs of God's greatness. The writer of Psalm 8 talks about the greatness of God as a matter of FAITH, when he calls God '*our Lord*', "**O Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth!**" This is why people who do not have faith in a god, look at the world and they do not see signs of God's marvelous design, His care for us. Instead, they see evolution. Their eyes convince them that the universe and every living thing got here by really, really, really incredible good luck.

The prophet Isaiah in faith, saw God's amazing work in the universe. Isaiah talks about the mystery of God when he says,

"Who knows the mind of God?"

To whom can the holy God be compared?"

The Lord is the everlasting God, he created all the world....

No-one understands his thoughts" (Isaiah 40:25a, 28 GNB).

It is absolutely true that God is almighty, all-knowing, and always has been. It is absolutely true that its beyond our human comprehension how God designed even the smallest of living cells, how God created an amazing diversity of animals, and insects, and plants, and birds. It is absolutely true that God is holy, glorious, reigning all of heaven and earth. He is the King of the angels who

continuously sing His praise. He is the mighty conqueror over the devil, his demons, over sin and death, over all evil.

And yet – (get this!) -- there is another side to God's greatness and awesomeness. I'm talking about God's character; God's heart; His attitude towards you and all creatures He made.

Have you ever done one of those family trees—that genealogy stuff? Digging into the past generations of family to find out if you are a long lost relative of Queen Elizabeth, or to discover that your great-great-great-grand-mama was a passenger on the Mayflower? Or, maybe you uncover the skeletons in the old family closet. Like your grandpa was secretly ... a ... Pittsburgh Steelers fan. (How embarrassing!)

Doing your family tree can tell you a lot about the people you came from. But one thing it can't do is to go beyond named relationships (son, mother, aunt). Your family tree can't give you any insight on what kind of relationship that was. Was the wife estranged from her husband? Were the nieces great friends or feuding cousins? Was the son always trying to please his father who had impossible demands? To get at the relationships you need a story. A diary. A memoir. An oral history. A box full of old letters.

Some passages in the Bible read like a family tree. One generation "begets" the next, who "begets" the next. The lineage starts with Jesus and his step-father, Joseph, and goes all the way back through Abraham to Adam and Eve. But it is the rest of the Bible that explains those relationships. The rest of the Bible tells the stories of what those relationships were like.

And at the beginning of all of those family ties is a God who IS RELATIONSHIP—the Trinity—Father, Son, and Spirit. This is where human history began. He made us in the "image of God" - that is, to be in relationship with God and with each other the same way that Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are in relationship with each other.

The Trinity is so tightly woven together, that one does not take precedence over the others, or is lower than the others, or can even be defined without the others. They are closer in relationship than is humanly possible.

It is their relatedness that we see in the name of Father and Son and Spirit, not hierarchy or three forms of experiencing God. The father is Father because of the relationship of father-son. The same goes for the Son. And the Spirit comes from the father and the son—His relationship is so very close that, His relationship is described as “proceeding” from, or penetrating the inner beings of both Father and Son.

It is that type of relationship that we – YOU -- enter into at baptism. God brought you into a new, transformed relationship with Him and with other people. On the cross God paid with His own life for the forgiveness of your sin, so that with your sin paid and removed, you can be brought into a renewed relationship between God and you.

Your relationship with God can now be like that relationship within the Trinity – like what Father, Son, and Spirit share. That’s what it means to Know God. THAT is truly knowing God, not just knowing intellectually some facts about God. Shoot, the devil and his demons know more facts about God than we do, and they hate Him.

Knowing God, instead, is loving Him. Knowing God is intimate, personal. Knowing God is placing all of your trust in Him to provide for all your needs each and everyday. Knowing God is placing all your trust in Jesus for eternity. Knowing God is relying on Him like a baby is helpless and relies on his or her parents for *everything*. Knowing God is all of life itself. So let me ask you again: Do you know God?

They say you can’t pick your relatives. And you can’t. You have no control over the family you were born into. God, however, picked you to be in His family. God wants you – and all people – to know Him. God chose you to adopt as His loved son or daughter you into His family.

In the Bible God guided Paul to write that – because of what Jesus has done for you, because He died and rose again - we are now BROTHERS and SISTERS of Christ. And you will inherit from your Daddy the family treasure, which is the kingdom of heaven. This is given to you - not deserved by any of us. We were just sinful god-haters, god-rejecters. We were nothing but the lowest and least. But

by His grace – by His free gift – here we are, adopted into His family, brought into a Trinity-like new relationship with God Himself. Wow!

There's a true story of a couple who adopted a baby boy after trying for five years to have their own biological baby. To their surprise, a short time after the adoption, the mother discovered she was pregnant, and she later gave birth to a boy. One day when the two boys were eight and nine years old, a neighbor came to visit. Seeing the boys playing together, the neighbor asked, "Which boy is yours?" "Both of them," the mother replied. The neighbor persisted. "But I mean, which one is the adopted one?" The mother gave a great reply. She said, "I've forgotten."

I've known families – and you probably have too – who have adopted children and loved those children and before long, they are so much a part of the family that any differences in appearance or genetic make-up were absolutely insignificant. They were one family – one loving family.

On this Trinity Sunday we remember that, Yes, God is magnificent! POWERFUL! Eternal. ALL-knowing. But more importantly, just as the very center of Father, Son, and Spirit is an amazing love that binds them together as one God, this true God loves you with this same kind of love. He is a personal God who wants to have a relationship with you! He wants you as His child.

Moses, way back in time, described God this way: Hear the great surprise in Moses' words:

"Search the past, the time before you were born, all the way back to the time when God created human beings on the earth. Search the entire earth. Has anything as great as this ever happened before? Has anyone ever heard of anything like this? ... Has any god ever dared to go and take a people from another nation and make them his own, as the Lord your God did for you ...?" (Deuteronomy 4:32,34).

God sought out the people. He WANTED to know them – personally know them in a close relationship. The people of Israel back then knew the facts of what God did to save them out of slavery in Egypt. But more, they could know HIM. Do you know God?

From the very first pages of the Bible we hear of a God who is powerful and great – He creates the earth with just a word – **"Let there be"** He said, and it happened. We also hear about a God who wants to be close to his people – God and Adam and Eve were like best friends. Adam and Eve KNEW God the Father, Son, and Spirit. Through Jesus, God is building this kind of relationship with you now. One day in heaven you will see God face-to-face. Do you know God?

Last week we celebrated Pentecost – the pouring of the Holy Spirit on Jesus' disciples and on us, His people. There is nothing more personal than the Spirit of God. In the Bible God promises you that:

- The Holy Spirit knows us better than we know ourselves.
- The Holy Spirit knows when we need reassuring.
- The Holy Spirit knows when we are afraid and timid and need the encouragement that comes from God's Word.
- The Holy Spirit knows when we are guilty and depressed and need forgiveness and comforting.
- The Holy Spirit becomes a part of our everyday, real-life existence in this world. He lives in us.

If you stop and think about it logically, this is impossible for a holy God to stay living in sinful folks like us. But He does! So, again, God is a mystery to us. A Wonderful, loving, mystery -- who just wants more than anything to know you, personally. Do you know this God?

The doctrine of the Trinity that we celebrate today, is not an attempt by the church to unravel the mystery around God. The words we use to describe the Trinity is not a way we figure God out, we got Him, we know Him, we got God down.

No. The doctrine of the Trinity deepens the mystery. It doesn't tell us everything about what God is and who He is. It raises more questions than give answers. But it does tell us about some important things about God – things that are life changing.

Who is God? He is your heavenly **FATHER** who made you. He takes care of you, and calls you His deeply loved, child.

Who is God? He is the **SON**, Jesus Christ who gave his life on the cross to re-establish your relationship with God. He is the one-and-only-way to God and to eternal life.

Who is God? God is the **HOLY SPIRIT** in you, giving you faith in God, and guiding you in your daily living as a Christ follower.

Faith in the Triune God acknowledges the might and majesty of God but at the same time trusts in a God who cares. Do you know God? Really know Him this way? I pray you do – or if you don't, that you will – now and always.

Amen.

