

Sermon  
Trinity Sunday  
Sunday, June 15th, 2025  
Church of the Ascension, Ottawa  
The Reverend Victoria Scott  
Readings: PROVERBS 8:1-4, 22-31, PSALM 8; ROMANS 5:1-5; JOHN 16:12-15

If you listened to this week's episode of The Hope Portal (included in the newsletter), you heard host Krista Tippett in conversation with Palestinian American poet Naomi Shihab Nye. The two talked about writing - about storytelling - and described it as a way to give "shape" to our experiences in life. Whether our experiences are good or bad, joyful or full of sorrow, telling the story of an experience does shape it. Telling the story of an experience gives us an opportunity to see it differently, to hold it, to get to know it, and in getting to know it, to get to know ourselves better. This happens when we write, it happens in conversation...

Our faith, as followers of Jesus, is full of both shape and story, and we need both, in our humanity. Scripture is full of examples of attempts to give shape to experiences of mystery - it is full of efforts to tell the story of encounters with the divine. I love what former Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams says about the Resurrection stories. He says: "...the very untidiness of the Resurrection stories is one of the main reasons for taking them seriously. What's going on is clearly people struggling to find words for something they had not expected." These stories are the efforts of those witnesses to the Resurrection to give shape to their experience, to hold it, and know it, and to have it hold them.

Our Gospel passage offers us Jesus shaping experiences and storytelling with the disciples. This passage is part of what is known as the "Farewell Discourse". In these chapters of John's Gospel, Jesus says a great many things to the disciples. He reminds them of what their time together has meant, and he prepares them for what is to come. He is giving shape and meaning to their experiences. He is speaking words that create memories in the disciples, and these memories - this

knowledge, this knowing - will shape their future. These memories will hold them and support them as they make their way into the future. In today's passage, we heard Jesus say "I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now." The disciples can't bear more without the Resurrection. They can't bear more without knowing that what looks like death is actually change and transformation. They can't bear more without knowing that death is not the end - that their relationship with God in and through Jesus can never be broken. This knowledge shapes them and all their experiences to come. The Resurrection changes everything, and it shapes and holds them - and it shapes and holds us. It shapes and holds us by showing us that love is stronger than death - stronger than anything.

Jesus goes on to speak of the Spirit of truth, who will guide, and glorify. "Glorify" and "glorify" often have negative connotations in contemporary culture. We speak of glorifying violence, or power. In John's Gospel, "glory" isn't negative. It means to make known, to make visible. We could also think of this as "giving shape to". Jesus glorified God: he gave shape to God, he made God knowable and known, and Jesus sent the Spirit so that this glorifying, this knowing, could continue!

We're celebrating Trinity Sunday today. While the doctrine of the Trinity - God in three persons, Creator, Son and Spirit - isn't technically biblical - it came later than Scripture - theologian Paul Octomire rightly points out that you can't really turn the page of the New Testament without finding a Trinitarian affirmation - that is, a paragraph that mentions Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, or God, Jesus and Advocate.

The language of our Gospel passage today is undeniably Trinitarian. Jesus is going to the Father, and the Spirit, the Advocate, is coming.

What if the doctrine of the Trinity is about shape and story? Not about a shape and story that limits and boxes in, but a shape and story that holds us, that bears us up in our experiences, and that shapes our perspectives and guides our living? What if the Trinity is God saying "know me": know me as Creator, know me as one of you in Jesus, and know me as Spirit, and mystery and energy? What if the

Trinity is God inviting us to know ourselves as created and creator - inviting us to be in relationship with the Trinity, and to join with Creator, Son and Spirit in the work of re-creation that happens every day?

If we are willing to join with the Trinity, this doctrine is anything but static and limiting. We are invited to feel the mystery in this concept of three-in-one and one-in-three. It's up to us to open ourselves to the mystery - to let mystery infuse and shape our perspectives. The Trinity offers a story of relationship and connection and love in Creator, Son and Spirit. There is relationship in the three-in-one and one-in-three, and connection with us, and with all of creation. We bring life to this concept, this doctrine, with our imaginations, with our hopes and dreams, with our living.

I'm grateful to my son Evan for building us the new prayer loom that you see at the back of the church. What is a prayer loom? Just as with our prayer station outside, a prayer loom brings tangibility to our prayers. It lets us see and touch and move as we pray. You take a skein of yarn, and attach it to a nail head, then wrap the yarn from nail-head to nail-head, back and forth across the frame, over and under the other weavings. With each directional change, you offer a prayer. The motion of your body, reaching and ducking to reach other points is a way of moving with God.

Today, I invite you to imagine the Trinity in this prayer loom. Imagine the eternal, mysterious relationship of Creator, Son and Spirit in that frame, holding you with its story of creation, and connection and love and energy. Imagine your life - your hopes, your dreams - in the yarn as you weave it on the loom. Know that you are held in the shape and story of God's love, and that you are invited to make that love known, and visible - in the world in the connections you make, in relationship with others and with the created world. Before you leave this place today, weave your thread on our prayer loom, and then, go out into the world, and weave God's love into the world, in Jesus name. Amen.

