

Relationship God

June 7, 2009

(Trinity Sunday - Year B)

Isaiah 6: 1-8; John 3:1-17

St. Alban's Episcopal Church, Waco, Texas

I am a big fan of the TV show, Seinfeld.

And one of my favorite characters on Seinfeld is George Costanza.

In one of the memorable scenes from Seinfeld, George Costanza is feeling tied down and hemmed in by his relationship with his girlfriend, Susan.

George then begins to explain how there are two sides to himself:

There is Independent George, and then there is Relationship George.

Independent George likes to do whatever he wants, whenever he wants, including hanging out at the coffee shop with his friends.

However, relationship George is in a loving relationship with his girlfriend, Susan.

In this Seinfeld episode, George Costanza feels the two sides of himself colliding together:

Independent George vs. Relationship George.

And George then explains his dilemma by saying:

“A George divided against itself cannot stand.”

On Seinfeld, George Costanza put his own personality into various categories, such as Independent George vs. Relationship George.

And, when we think about God as the Trinity, I think that we want to put God into various categories, as well.

All of us have our own images of God.

And the Bible also gives us images of God.

In the Old Testament reading today, the Prophet Isaiah sees a vision of God, with the Lord sitting on a high and lofty throne.

Heavenly creatures surround God, each of them with six wings.

Then God sends Isaiah out to speak the truth to God's people.

In the Gospel reading today, Nicodemus comes to Jesus at night on a

fact finding mission.

Jesus tells Nicodemus that God blows like wind and that God births us for a second time.

Jesus completes his teaching to Nicodemus by telling him that God loves the world so much that God has sent us God's only Son.

In these two images from scripture, God is never an Independent God. God is always Relationship God, reaching out to people and sending people and birthing people and including all people into God's fellowship.

The God that we as Christians worship and serve is a Relationship God. We call the Relationship God: the Trinity.

The Trinity is one God, in three persons.

The Trinity is a relationship and a fellowship of three persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

The Trinity is never an Independent God, but always a Relationship God, loving with us and creating with us.

Most people, in every day conversation, do not talk about Relationship God very much.

And they especially don't make the Trinity a topic of cocktail party conversation.

However, a book came out last summer, a book called *The Shack*, which did get people talking and buzzing about the Trinity as a Relationship God.

When you walked through airports last year, you would see that many people had picked up the book, *The Shack*, and were reading it, making it a word-of-mouth sensation.

The author of *The Shack*, William Young, illustrates the Relationship God as a Trinity of three persons.

In the author's vision of God, God the Father is a big black woman named Papa.

Jesus, God the Son, is a Jewish fisherman.

And God the Holy Spirit is a flighty and ethereal Asian woman named Sarayu.

All of these images of the three persons of the Trinity might seem a little jarring and bizarre to many folks.

But probably no more bizarre than the image seen by Isaiah of God sitting on a throne surrounded by creatures with flapping their six wings.

And probably no more jarring than the image that Jesus gave to Nicodemus of a God who requires a second birth.

In the book called *The Shack*, a different image of the Relationship God is presented -

As the three persons of God are seen as a black woman, a Jewish man and an Asian woman.

And in *The Shack*, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are in constant relationship.

The Father, Son and Holy Spirit enjoy each other's company and make dinner together and laugh at jokes and care for the people that the Relationship God has created.

In *The Shack*, we see a very different image of one God in three persons, three persons in a web of interconnected relationships.

Last Thursday night, I attended Scott's graduation from Midway High School.

The graduation ceremony was great.

And I must admit that I am still contemplating the meaning of this milestone in the life of our family.

There were many different parts of the graduation that I will always remember.

Yet, as I contemplate the mystery of the Trinity as an illustration of the Relationship God,

I observed at graduation - that when each graduate crossed the stage to receive their diploma, there was always a group of people in the audience who had a relationship to each graduating senior.

As each graduate crossed the stage, sometimes there was polite clapping and a few cheers from one section of the arena.

Other times when a graduate's name was announced, a whole row of family and friends would jump up from their seats and yell out "we

love you.”

Other times when a name was announced, bullhorns were blown and high-fives were exchanged among family and friends in even a different part of the arena.

As each graduate walked across the stage, not a single one of them graduated from high school as an independent, isolated person. However, from various parts of the arena, we were treated to an image of what it means to be in a web of relationships, as the people who had birthed and diapered and scolded and taught and coached and prayed for these young people demonstrated their link of love to these young graduates.

You see, there is really no such thing as an independent person. Just as there is no such thing as an Independent God. All of us are relationship people.

And when we put an image to God, we should not picture God as just an independent person or as just one image.

Instead, the Christian God is a Trinity - an interweaving of persons that shows us what it is like to live in love.

For to live in love is to live like the Father, Son and Holy Spirit,

To live in love is to live in a web of relationships.

To live in love is to cheer and shout out “we love you” to each other, encouraging others as we walk across the stage of life.

There is no such thing as an independent God or an independent human being.

Because all of us, including God, live in a web of loving relationships.

So as we walk across the stage of life,

We are never truly alone.

For as we walk across the stage of life,

We hear thunderous applause and shouts of “we love you” coming from the Trinity: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

AMEN.

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