

May 31st 2026

8.00 Holy Communion All Saints Oakham

**10.30am Holy Communion Langham (joint service
with All Saints Oakham)**

*Isaiah 40.12-17, 27-e, 2 Corinthians 13.11-e,
Matthew 28.16-e*

May the words of my mouth and the thoughts of all our hearts be now and always acceptable in your sight, O Lord, our strength and our redeemer.

The concept of the Trinity, God revealed as Father, Son and Holy Spirit evolved as the early church tried to make sense of the apostolic witness to both a human and a divine Jesus, of what was revealed to them about the relationship between the Father, Son and Spirit revealed in their developing scriptures, and of their own experience in worshipping Jesus as Lord and God. All this led, over several centuries, to the formulation of the historic creeds – the Apostles, the Nicene and the Athanasian, which are very much intellectual constructs which try to capture what the Trinity is all about. Others over the centuries have tried to conceptualise the Trinity in different ways – through the drawing of complex diagrams showing interactions between Father, Son and Holy Spirit, through icons, such as the well known Rublev icon that is on the front of Worship for the Week, that shows the three angels who visited Abraham as a representation of the Trinity, and, perhaps most familiar, through the Trinitarian structure of some hymns, where God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit are addressed in successive verses. And there is nothing wrong in any of these ways’ although some of the hymns do go a bit far in making an absolute distinction between the persons of the Trinity. But our readings today seem to me to take a different route – a simple acceptance that God is three and God is one and the working out of what that means for those who try to follow him, both as a community and as individuals. Let’s look at the three readings in turn – and for all three we shall see that the context is very important.

The Old Testament reading comes from the book of the prophet Isaiah. The first 39 chapters of the book come from the period before the Jewish people were taken into exile in Babylon, and are basically prophetic warnings that judgement was approaching. Then in chapter 40, from which we have read today, the voice and the mood changes. These chapters are addressed to the Jews in exile, seventy years or so after they had been carried off to Babylon. It is clear that they were in a state of despair, believing that there was no possibility of their situation ever changing or their exile ever ending, but the prophetic words give them a promise of restoration and hope. The prophet speaks of the power of the Creator God and his Spirit within the natural order, and his infinite knowledge from before the creation of the world, when the Spirit moved over the face of the waters.

*Who has measured the waters in the hollow of his hand
and marked off the heavens with a span,
enclosed the dust of the earth in a measure,
and weighed the mountains in scales
and the hills in a balance?
Who has directed the spirit of the Lord,
or as his counsellor has instructed him?*

And the prophet challenges his listeners to realise just who their God is, and how great his power to change the fortunes of both nations and individuals, and in doing so, begins his message of hope.

*Have you not known? Have you not heard?
The Lord is the everlasting God,
the Creator of the ends of the earth.
He does not faint or grow weary;
his understanding is unsearchable.
He gives power to the faint,
and strengthens the powerless.
Even youths will faint and be weary,
and the young will fall exhausted;
but those who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength,
they shall mount up with wings like eagles,
they shall run and not be weary,
they shall walk and not faint.*

He then goes on in the chapters that follow, to amplify this and in particular to introduce the figure of the Servant of God, the messiah like figure that will bring about this ultimate restoration of both the nation and of individuals – and who Christians of course take to be Jesus. So a message in a pre-Trinitarian context if you like, calling God's people from despair to hope, from exhaustion to new life, new strength.

The context of the second reading is quite different – from the very end of Paul's second letter to the church at Corinth. That letter would not have been an easy to take in for those to whom it was first read in the Christian assembly there. In it Paul berates the Corinthian church for their factionalism and their disunity, and calls them back to a unity based on what they had known – the worship of the one he calls the God of peace and unity. He ends by urging them to

listen to my appeal, agree with one another, live in peace; and the God of love and peace will be with you. Greet one another with a holy kiss.

And ends with one of the most well known the salutations or prayers in scripture

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with all of you.

The Trinitarian nature of God is again just assumed, and he urges them, in their corporate life to enter into it – to know again the grace of God that was shown in his love for the world by the free gift of his Son Jesus, by his sacrificial death and resurrection, and to know the communion of the spirit between them and in them. Calling them, within this Trinitarian understanding, from conflict to reconciliation, from strife and disagreement to peace.

Now moving onto the gospel, from the very end of Jesus' earthly ministry, his commission to the disciples. Again context is important. At this stage the number of disciples was small, they were still hiding from the Jewish authorities or at least being careful in their movements, and there were still some within their midst who doubted what was going on. A small unsure and uncertain group of men and women. And Jesus speaks to them

All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.

He now has the power and authority given to him by God the Father. He is the Lord, the giver of life. He continues

Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you

A commission to proclaim God in all his Trinitarian fullness to the world, and to reconcile the world to God, but with the promise

I am with you always, to the end of the age.

God the Son, with the Father and the Spirit, ever present with his people in their work for him. A message then that leads the disciples from fear to confidence, from weakness to strength – and we read the outworking of that in the rest of the New Testament and in the history of the church, hugely flawed as it is.

So what is it saying to us today. Again it speaks to us as a community, and to us individuals – a call to enter into the life of the Trinity. The Rublev icon is based around a circular composition of the three angels representing Father, Son and Holy Spirit, with the cup of wine at the centre, and many would see this as inviting those who ponder it to enter into that relationship between the members of the Trinity, primarily through the eucharist. As a community, these readings urge us to realise that, even in these rather depressing days I the world in which we live, the promise of God still remains.

*those who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength,
they shall mount up with wings like eagles,
they shall run and not be weary,*

they shall walk and not faint

The future is one of that transforms of our despair to hope and joy. And to those of us who are weary and exhausted with, to quote the Book of Common Prayer, *the changes and chances of this fleeting world* there is the promise of hope and joy and restoration.

And the readings speak to us of the overriding need for us as a community to show God's love to one another, as those for whom Jesus died and rose again, and, perhaps as importantly, for us to accept the love of others. To guard against factionalism, and strive for unity, both within individual churches and between churches. Within the grace of Jesus, the love of God and the fellowship of the Spirit to move from distrust and argument to a sharing of God's peace.

And finally there is still the commission. We have a purpose to spread the gospel in our communities, to our friends, to help make disciples in the name of the three in one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. And even when the boiler fails, or the appointment process for a new Rector stalls, we must never forget that that is our first priority. Such witness and outreach is not easy, but we can have the confidence that Jesus is with us, even to the end of the age.

So the readings, in their different ways, call us to enter into the life of the Trinity - to move from despair to hope in our lives, from strife to peace on our communities, and from fear to confidence in our witness. I end with words from one of the great Trinitarian hymns, ascribed to St Patrick fifteen hundred years ago that, in its language of binding echoes this idea of sharing the life of the Trinity.

*I bind unto myself the name,
the strong name of the Trinity,
by invocation of the same,
the Three in One, and One in Three,
of whom all nature hath creation,
eternal Father, Spirit, Word.
Praise to the Lord of my salvation:
salvation is of Christ the Lord.*