



# 40B - TRINITY SUNDAY - BEAUFORT REGION

Getting to know God

## Abstract

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.

John 3:16-17

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## John 3:1–17

**3** Now there was a Pharisee, a man named Nicodemus who was a member of the Jewish ruling council. <sup>2</sup> He came to Jesus at night and said, “Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God. For no one could perform the signs you are doing if God were not with him.”

<sup>3</sup> Jesus replied, “Very truly I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again.”

<sup>4</sup> “How can someone be born when they are old?” Nicodemus asked. “Surely they cannot enter a second time into their mother’s womb to be born!”

<sup>5</sup> Jesus answered, “Very truly I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless they are born of water and the Spirit. <sup>6</sup> Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit. <sup>7</sup> You should not be surprised at my saying, ‘You must be born again.’ <sup>8</sup> The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit.”

<sup>9</sup> “How can this be?” Nicodemus asked.

<sup>10</sup> “You are Israel’s teacher,” said Jesus, “and do you not understand these things? <sup>11</sup> Very truly I tell you, we speak of what we know, and we testify to what we have seen, but still you people do not accept our testimony. <sup>12</sup> I have spoken to you of earthly things and you do not believe; how then will you believe if I speak of heavenly things? <sup>13</sup> No one has ever gone into heaven except the one who came from heaven—the Son of Man. <sup>14</sup> Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, <sup>15</sup> that everyone who believes may have eternal life in him.”

<sup>16</sup> For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. <sup>17</sup> For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.

Response:

For the word of the Lord

**Thanks be to God**

## 40B - Trinity Sunday - Beaufort Region

### Getting to know God

**SUNDAY, MAY 30, 2021 | AFTER PENTECOST | HOLY TRINITY | YEAR B**

Old Testament	Isaiah 6:1–8
Psalm	Psalm 29
New Testament	Romans 8:12–17
Gospel	John 3:1–17

#### **John 3.1-17**

Jesus and Nicodemus discuss what it means to be born again by the Spirit. This happens shortly after Jesus clears the Temple, creating an interesting link with what it means to live a holy life pleasing to God. In this passage, Jesus instructs Nicodemus on how to become part of the kingdom of God. It is not a set of steps; rather, Nicodemus is told he must be born again.

God is discovered hidden in plain sight in our individual and communal lives: awesomely ‘other’; intimately close; sometimes both. Our encounters with God draw us into deeper, more wholesome, and interconnected relationships. We find that God is untameable yet present to every leaf and flower. God is wonderfully comforting, yet uncomfortably challenging! His visible presence is everywhere, yet elusive, as if God had just gone around the corner.

This week we explore experiencing God in mystery and closeness.

	<b>Pre-Service</b>
<b>Verse 1, Verse 2, Verse 3,</b>	<b>Introit</b> TIS #716 – “Father, we adore you” TIS #721 – “He became poor” SPIRIT OF THE LIVING GOD, FALL AFRESH ON ME" (BOP #400, vs. 1) (Ch4 #619)
	<b>Greeting</b>  May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ The Love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all  <b>and also with you</b>
	<b>We Gather</b>  Holy, holy, holy is our wonderful God! Creator! Saviour! Sustainer! Let us worship our God of infinite mystery, yet who is closer to us than our own breath. Amen.

	<p><b>Acknowledgements</b></p> <p>Wonderful God,  as we gaze at the miracle of your world,  intricate and interconnected,  huge in scope, microscopic in detail,  we are amazed.</p> <p>We wonder that you love each one of us,  seeing us, knowing us and filling us with the breath of life.  You hold us in being moment by moment.  Help us to worship you as mystery, to hug you as friend,  and with you, to care for the whole of creation.  Amen.</p>
	<p><b>We say sorry</b></p> <p>God of truth,  we bring to you our sorrow for our sins.  For seeking earthly absolutes and not eternal mysteries:  <b>We are truly sorry.</b>  For rooting ourselves in the finite and not nurturing the infinite within:  <b>We are truly sorry.</b>  For saying 'I' much more than 'we' and for damaging relationships:  <b>We are truly sorry.</b>  Forgive us and strengthen us, we pray.  For we are truly sorry.  Amen.</p>
	<p><b>Assurance of forgiveness</b></p> <p>Living God, you choose  to save, not to judge,  to forgive, not to condemn,  to turn towards, not away,  to show us your nature and not to hide.</p> <p>You allow us to know you,  to love you and to serve you –  and for all these things, and more,  we are truly thankful.  Amen.</p>
	<p><b>Hymn/song</b></p> <p>TIS # 675 – “Lord, the light of your love is shining”</p>

## Welcome

On Trinity Sunday,  
     it can be tempting to treat doctrine about God  
 as a kind of theological Rubik's cube –  
     solve it and full understanding will be ours.  
 These readings suggest that encountering God  
     is a precious and confounding experience.

In today's passage,  
     Jesus instructs Nicodemus on how to become part of the kingdom of God.  
 It is not a set of steps; rather,  
     Nicodemus is told he must be born again.  
 God is discovered hidden in plain sight  
     in our individual and communal lives:  
 awesomely 'other'; intimately close; sometimes both.

Our encounters with God draw us into deeper,  
     more wholesome, and interconnected relationships.  
 We find that God is untameable  
     yet present to every leaf and flower.  
 God is wonderfully comforting, yet uncomfortably challenging!  
 His visible presence is everywhere, yet elusive,  
     as if God had just gone around the corner.

## Nicodemus video – The Skitguys

*Let us pray (based on Psalm 19)*  
 We gather in your name, O Lord,  
     for you are the Lord who gives strength to your people  
 and who blesses them with peace.  
 You are the Lord who comes close to your people  
     and draws them into your heart.  
 You are the Lord who equips your people  
     and calls them to serve you in the world.  
 You are the Lord who loves your people  
     and invites them into the fellowship of the Holy Trinity.  
 You are the Lord.  
     We worship you.  
 Amen.

## Readings

Jesus and Nicodemus discuss what it means to be born again by the Spirit.  
 This happens shortly after Jesus clears the Temple,  
     creating an interesting link with what it means  
 to live a holy life pleasing to God.

John 3.1-17

*respond*

For the word of the Lord

**Thanks be to God**

**5 verses****Hymn/Song**~~TIS #717 – “Give thanks with a grateful heart”~~~~TIS #143 – “Immortal, invisible, God only wise”~~~~TIS #407 (AHB #320) – “BREATHE ON ME, BREATH OF GOD”~~

## Response

There is a Christmas cartoon about a character called Papa Panov

It is a retelling of a folktale by Leo Tolstoy.

It is Tolstoy’s original tale I want to talk about today but you may recognise the latter.

Tolstoy’s original story is set in Russia in winter,

we are told Martin was a poor man.

He had lost his wife and all his children one by one to disease.

Now, in old age,

he lived alone in a small room.

His situation had made him sad, bitter and lonely.

He had nothing to hope for.

One day it was suggested to him

that he should read the Bible

in the hope that there would be something there

which could help him.

Martin began to read the Gospels.

He read of Jesus’ love for others

the poor, the sick, and the lonely like himself.

He read of his teaching

that the last should be first,

and that we should forgive as God forgave us.

Gradually Martin’s heart softened.

If only he could meet this Jesus! He thought.

Martin read too about those who refused to welcome Christ,

those who treated Jesus badly.

He wouldn’t have treated him like that!

During this time

one night

in the depths of winter

he had a dream.

He dreamt that Christ spoke to him.

“Tomorrow, Martin, I will come to visit you.”

The next day Martin tried to convince himself

it was just a dream,

but even so,

he couldn’t help peering out of his window hopefully, just occasionally at first.

All he could see, though,

was an old street sweeper, Stephanitch.

Stephanitch was even poorer than Martin.

On this winters day Martin could see

that Stephanitch was freezing cold and bone-weary.  
He called out to him to come inside.

“The samovar

(a Russian metal container used to heat and boil water and make tea) is boiling  
come and have some tea!”

The street sweeper came in and gratefully drank several cups of hot tea,  
but he noticed that Martin kept looking out of the window.

“Are you expecting someone, Martin?” he asked

Martin told him of his dream.

“I know it is foolish,

but perhaps – just perhaps it might happen as I dreamed.”

Stephanitch shrugged

who can say what might happen in life if God wills it...?

He went back out into the snow,

thanking Martin for his kindness.

A little later Martin noticed a stranger standing outside his window.

He quickly checked again - Was this Jesus?

But no, it was just a young woman carrying a baby.

But then Martin noticed, though,

that her clothes were threadbare

and she wore no cloak against the cold.

The baby too, looked half-frozen.

He went out and brought her in,

He gave her some soup and bread he had prepared for his own lunch,  
and he listened to her story.

Her soldier husband had died, leaving her penniless.

She had no money,

no food for herself and her child,

and nothing left to pawn.

As she rose up to go Martin gave her a little money, and an old cloak.

He wished he could do more,

but she was very grateful to him,

and went on her way happy.

But Martin still hadn't had the visitor he longed for.

As he gazed disheartened out of the window,

suddenly a small drama began to unfold.

There was an old woman selling apples from a basket on the other side of the street.

She was laden down,

not only with the apples,

but with the bundle of firewood she was planning to take home with her.

As Martin watched

a hungry looking young boy came past her,

he snatched an apple from the basket and tried to run off.

But the old woman was too fast for him,

and she grabbed hold of him before he could start running.

“You miserable thief” she shouted.

“You will be punished for this!”  
She started to beat him severely.

Martin ran outside.

“Stop this! He yelled  
The boy has only taken an apple, one apple, and that because he is hungry  
of course he has done wrong,  
but there is no need to punish him so brutally.  
If God were to punish us for our sins as you punish this boy  
who could survive it?”

The old woman looked at the boy  
and she thought of her own children, now grown  
this could have easily been one of them, she thought,  
and straight away forgave him.

The boy apologised  
and seeing her struggle to lift her bundle of wood,  
he picked it up and carried it to her home for her.

Martin watched as the two of them went off down the street happily together.

Martin was pleased to see peace restored in his small world,  
but he was still sad that Christ hadn't come.

He went back to his room as darkness fell,  
feeling a little foolish for having trusted in a dream.

He opened his Bible to read again.

But as he read he heard a voice behind him.

“Martin, Martin, don't you know me?”

“Who is it? “ Martin asked, peering into the darkness.

“It is I” said the voice,

and out of the corner of the room stepped the figure of Stephanitch,  
who smiled and vanished.

“It is I” said the voice again,

and the woman with the baby came towards him and vanished.

“It is I” said the voice a third time,

and the apple seller and boy emerged from the shadows before vanishing.

And Martin looked down at the Bible in his hands.

“As you did it for one of the least of my brothers and sisters  
you did it for me.”

And Martin knew that Christ had indeed come to him that day,  
and that he, Martin had welcomed and cared for him  
just as he'd longed to.

And that is Tolstoy's story of Martin the old Cobbler.

You may well recognise it as a little like the well-known tale of Papa Panov  
that has been on TV as a cartoon at Christmas.

But the subtle differences make this original important to us.

Our story is not set at Christmas time,



but it takes place on a cold day,  
one among many in the long, dark Russian winter.  
It is a significant detail.

Christmas is a special time;  
perhaps a time when we can all believe miracles might happen,  
when we are alert to the fact that God might show up,  
when love and peace could suddenly break out.

But beyond that the world seems far more humdrum, far less hopeful,  
especially for the old, sick and lonely.

Tolstoy called his story "Where Love is, God is",  
and the point he was trying to make was  
that it is in the everyday acts of love  
the ones that don't seem special at all  
that God truly longs to be revealed and known.

The other difference from Papa Panov is  
that it isn't just the kindly street sweeper and the poor mother and baby  
who help Martin to see God in his midst.

It is also the bad tempered apple-seller and the thieving child.

Love doesn't always look soft and gentle.  
It is also seen when we act courageously  
to set straight what is crooked in the world.

That is something we might shy away from; who are we to interfere?

But if we stand by while people treat each other unjustly  
this story tells us that we are missing God in our midst,  
missing the chance to be part of his work of reconciliation.

It is a lovely story in either of its forms  
but today is Trinity Sunday,  
and you might be wondering what this story has to do with the theme  
of the trinity by now. hmmm

The doctrine of the Trinity  
was the early Church's attempt at expressing their experience of God.

They'd inherited the Jewish belief in him as a loving Creator,  
whose work could be seen all around them in nature.

The Psalm we read today reminded us of that.

They had come to believe that they saw him in Jesus.

His love for those around him was just like the love of his Father.

And then, when Jesus left them

they discovered that through his Spirit he was with them still.

They felt him to be close just as he had been before.

It was their experience that taught them about God,

not something they'd read in a book,

or heard in a sermon.

"I still have many things to say to you,  
but you cannot bear them now..."

said Jesus in today's Gospel,  
speaking on the eve of his death.

His point was that there were things they would only discover  
as they lived the life he'd called them to.  
There was no instant download of wisdom to be had.  
There were no shortcuts.  
We learn the way of Christ by living it.

God who is known in Creation.  
God who is known in Jesus.  
God who is known in the here and now by his Spirit.

The doctrine of the Trinity reminds us that the God we worship is both  
seated in majesty but also near at hand,  
present in eternity but present too in the here and now,  
this moment,  
the things we struggle with, in our daily lives,  
the person next door,  
our workmates,  
the person in front of us in the traffic jam.

Depending on how we regard them and treat them  
we will either see God in them, or not  
and they will see God in us or not.

The doctrine of the Trinity  
might seem like the most obscure and mysterious idea in the world,  
but actually it reminds us of the God who wants most of all to be known to us  
in the ordinariness of our daily lives.

Trinity Sunday marks the end of a long cycle of special stories.  
We have come through Advent and Christmas,  
the joy and the vulnerability of Jesus' birth.  
We have come through the drama of his arrest,  
his death, his resurrection, his ascension.

Special stories, special times,  
but it is in the ordinary times of our lives  
that their message begins to come home to us.

I read of a concept of "sacred ordinariness",  
the idea that we need to regard  
each moment, each place, each person, each event,  
however dull or unlikely,  
as one in which we can meet with God,  
and should expect to meet with him  
and have our eyes open for him.

I pray that,  
like Martin the cobbler,  
we will find that "sacred ordinariness" individually and together in the days that lie ahead.  
Amen.

	<p><b>Hymn/song</b>  TIS #753 – “You are holy” – x2  TIS #650 – “Brother, sister, let me serve you” Vs 1,2,3,6  TIS #111 – “Praise to the Lord, the Almighty, the King of creation”</p>
	<p><b>Offering</b></p> <p>Part of our calling as Christians  is to freely share the gifts we have been given.  Let us bring our offering before God.</p> <p><u>Dedication of offering</u>  Source of all life,  We hear your call and offer this money as a symbol of our lives  dedicated to your service.  May it be used along with our time and talents  as an extension of your work in the world.  Amen</p>
	<p><b>Notices</b></p>
	<p><b>Prayers for all people</b></p> <p>God who loves the world,  as the shape of the global pandemic changes  we pray urgently for our world.</p> <p>We pray for the countries  that are facing rising cases of coronavirus and severe oxygen shortages.  For India, Argentina, Nepal, Pakistan and the many others with infections surging,  please help the medics as they care for the sick and dying.  For the health systems struggling to cope  and the politicians making choices  that will have far-reaching impacts on their populations,  please bring resources and good decision making.  We pray for the global poor.  We pray that the rich nations  would play their part in vaccination programmes across the globes.</p> <p>God who loves the world,  <b>hear our prayer.</b></p> <p>God who gave his son,  We are shocked at the images that have emerged this week  of the bodies of children washed up on a beach in Libya.  The human cost and tragedy of the migration crisis across Europe  is highlighted so poignantly in these pictures of lost children.  As a God who gave his only son,  we pray for your compassion on these desperate families.  Help us to view displaced people with kindness.</p>

God who gave his son,  
**hear our prayer.**

God of life not death,  
     in the week that marks a year since the death of George Floyd  
 we pray again for those in our world who face injustice.  
 We pray for people whose lives are in danger  
     because of the colour of their skin, their beliefs,  
     or because of their difference.  
 Thank you for those who are actively involved  
     in fighting injustice.

God of life not death,  
**hear our prayer.**

God of salvation,  
 thank you for the freedom we find in you.  
     Many of our teenagers are struggling with mental health issues  
     and so we ask that they would find help and start to heal.  
 Give our young people opportunities to process the last year and a half  
     and to feel that as one chapter ends another is starting.  
 We pray that all would have hope for the future  
     and a deep sense of peace and calm  
 God of salvation,  
**hear our prayer.**

God of eternity,  
     thank you that you love this world so much you gave you son.  
 Thank you that you sent your son not to condemn this world but to save it.  
 Help us to live in the light of this truth and all of your promises this week.  
 God of eternity,  
**hear our prayer.**  
 Amen

God the Father, ground me in your being as we pray for those who flounder and struggle with the pressures of life. May they see some shape, some purpose to life and find a way to move forward. May their struggles become less tangled, and may they find calm in the chaos of their living...

God the Son, enfold me in your love as we pray for those who know little or no love, security or peace; for those who live in fear and loneliness; for those who are shrouded in pain and smothered by death; for those without family support and succour, the friendless and the homeless...

God the Holy Spirit, embolden us to share as we pray for those who have no hope, no dreams, no visions; for those who have no knowledge of you, who have not seen you, nor felt you, nor encountered you; for those without faith and trust, those seemingly lost to themselves and to you...

God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, these are all your children;  
 for them we pray.

	Amen.
	<p><b>Lord's Prayer</b></p> <p>Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.  Your kingdom come, your will be done  on earth as in heaven.  Give us today our daily bread.  Forgive us our sins  as we forgive those who sin against us.  Save us from the time of trial,  and deliver us from evil.  For the kingdom, the power,  and the glory are yours,  now and forever.  AMEN <sup>i</sup></p>
<b>Verse 1, Verse 2,</b>	<p><b>Hymn/song</b>  TIS #666 – “We are marching in the light of God”</p>
	<p><b>We are sent out</b></p> <p>Wonderful God,                    help us to keep adventuring with you.  May we allow ourselves to be filled                    with visions of your awesomeness,  and may we know your presence                    closer to us than our own breathing.</p> <p>Thank you for creating us,                    for being visible to us in Jesus,  and for inspiring and empowering us                    with your interweaving Spirit.  Amen.</p> <p>May the Lord bless us                    and keep us  May His face shine upon us                    and be gracious to us  May he lift up His countenance upon us                    and give us peace</p>
	<p><b>Benediction</b>  Tis #778 – “shalom”</p> <p>Tis 716</p> <p>1. ——— Father, we adore you;  ——— lay our lives before you;  ——— how we love you.</p> <p>2. ——— Jesus, we adore you;  ——— lay our lives before you;  ——— how we love you.</p> <p>3. ——— Spirit, we adore you;  ——— lay our lives before you;  ——— how we love you.</p>

	Thank you

ii English Language Liturgical Consultation, 1988