

Trinity Sunday_YrC_052216_mcr
All Saints Episcopal Church

In the name of the one God: Wisdom, Love and Joy. Amen.

Good morning!

Yesterday morning, as I started working on my sermon, I saw on Facebook (because I always go there for inspiration first!) a post from Episcopal Church Memes. Now a 'meme,' in case you don't know, is usually a picture or a cartoon with a caption added onto the picture. The caption on this meme read: "As the Parish Deacon, I don't get asked to preach very often, but when I do, it's either Trinity Sunday or the Second Sunday of Easter."

Now, lest you think that the caption is totally silly, I have to say that this is the 6th time in the last 8 years for me to preach on Trinity Sunday - and this is the 4th year in a row! Just saying.

Maybe this is my chance, perhaps, to get it right.

During the first 5 Trinity sermons, I have quotes parts of the Athanasian Creed; I have talked about other terms for the Trinity, using the 'Rule of Three' (like Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and Creator, Redeemer and Sanctifier); I've talked about the relationship of the persons of the Trinity as being like people in a circle dance; and, I even talked about a YouTube video that uses the illustration of coffee, ice cream and Bailey's Irish Cream mixed up in a blender! That was the most fun, but maybe not the most 'kosher!'

But in my studying last week, I ran across something new: "*While the West took on the Trinity like a Rubic's Cube, the East went on a more fruitful journey: what mattered to them most about the Trinity was not that it was correct but that it was beautiful.*" (Daniel Simons)

When I read that, I knew right away what I should do for my 6th, and last, time to preach on Trinity Sunday.

When I was 8 or 9 years old, my parents gave me for my birthday a set of the books known collectively as *The Chronicles of Narnia*, by C.S. Lewis. I read all 7 of them right away, one right after the other. I couldn't get enough of them. And I have re-read them countless times

The 6th book - *The Magician's Nephew* - is a prequel to the other books of the series, in which part of the story is the creation of Narnia 1000 years before the time of *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*. It is this creation story that I have always wanted to include on Trinity Sunday.

The story centers on two children, Digory and Polly, who live next door to each other in London. Digory's Uncle, who fancies himself a magician, makes some magic rings that allow travel between one world and another, and talks Digory and Polly into trying them out. They end up in a woodland filled with lots of pools of water, which they eventually decide must each lead to a different world.

When they jump into one of the pools, they stumble into a dark void that is a world not yet created. This is where we pick up the narrative: (You're welcome to close your eyes to listen if you'd like.)

In the darkness something was happening at last. A voice had begun to sing. It was very far away and Digory found it hard to decide from what direction it was coming. Sometimes it seemed to come from all directions at once. Sometimes he almost thought it was coming out of the earth beneath them. Its lower notes were deep enough to be the voice of the earth herself. There were no words. There was hardly even a tune. But it was, beyond comparison, the most beautiful noise he had ever heard. It was so beautiful he could hardly bear it...

...Then two wonders happened at the same moment. One was that the voice was suddenly joined by other voices; more voices than you could possibly count. They

were in harmony with it, but far higher up the scale: cold, tingling, silvery voices. The second wonder was that the blackness overhead, all at once, was blazing with stars. They didn't come out gently one by one, as they do on a summer evening. One moment there had been nothing but darkness; next moment a thousand, thousand points of light leaped out - single stars, constellations, and planets, brighter and bigger than any in our world. There were no clouds. The new stars and the new voices began at exactly the same time. If you had seen and heard it, as Digory did, you would have felt quite certain that it was the stars themselves who were singing, and that it was the First Voice, the deep one, which had made them appear and made them sing.

The Voice on the earth was now louder and more triumphant; but the voices in the sky, after singing loudly with it for a time, began to get fainter. And now something else was happening.

Far away, and down near the horizon, the sky began to turn grey. A light wind, very fresh, began to stir. The sky, in that one place, grew slowly and steadily paler. You could see shapes of hills standing up dark against it. All the time the Voice went on singing.

There was soon light enough for them to see one another's faces...

...The eastern sky changed from white to pink and from pink to gold. The Voice rose and rose, till all the air was shaking with it. And just as it swelled to the mightiest and most glorious sound it had yet produced, the sun arose.

Digory had never seen such a sun...You could imagine that it laughed for joy as it came up. And as its beams shot across the land the travelers could see for the first time what sort of place they were in. It was a valley through which a broad, swift river wound its way, flowing eastward towards the sun. Southward there were mountains, northward there were lower hills. But it was a valley of mere earth, rock and water; there was not a tree, not a bush, not a blade of grass to be

seen. The earth was of many colors: they were fresh, hot and vivid. They made you feel excited; until you saw the Singer himself, and then you forgot everything else.

It was a Lion. Huge, shaggy, and bright it stood facing the risen sun. Its mouth was wide open in song and it was about three hundred yards away...

...[And then] the song changed.

The Lion was pacing to and fro about that empty land and singing his new song. It was softer and more lilting than the song by which he had called up the stars and the sun; a gentle, rippling music. And as he walked and sang the valley grew green with grass. It spread out from the Lion like a pool. It ran up the sides of the little hills like a wave. In a few minutes it was creeping up the lower slopes of the distant mountains, making that young world every moment softer. The light wind could now be heard ruffling the grass. Soon there were other things besides grass. The higher slopes grew dark with heather. Patches of rougher and more bristling green appeared in the valley. Digory did not know what they were until one began coming up quite close to him. It was a little, spiky thing that grew out dozens of arms and covered those arms with green and grew larger at the rate of about an inch every two seconds. There were dozens of these things all around him now. When they were nearly as tall as himself he saw what they were. "Trees!" he exclaimed...

...There was certainly plenty to watch and to listen to... [Digory and Polly] stood on cool, green grass, sprinkled with daisies and buttercups. A little way off, along the river bank, willows were growing. On the other side tangles of flowering currant, lilac, wild rose and rhododendron closed them in...

...All this time the Lion's song, and his stately prowl, to and fro, backwards and forwards, was going on... Polly was finding the song more and more interesting because she thought she was beginning to see the connection between the music and the things that were happening. When a line of dark firs sprang up on a ridge about a hundred yards away she felt that they were connected with a series of deep, prolonged notes which the Lion had sung a second before. And when he burst

into a rapid series of lighter notes she was not surprised to see primroses suddenly appearing in every direction. Thus, with an unspeakable thrill, she felt quite certain that all the things were coming (as she said) "out of the Lion's head."

...now the song had once more changed. It was more like what we should call a tune, but it was also far wilder. It made you want to run and jump and climb. It made you want to shout...

...Can you imagine a stretch of grassy land bubbling like water in a pot? For that is really the best description of what was happening now. In all directions it was swelling into humps. They were of very different sizes, some no bigger than mole-hills, some as big as wheelbarrows, two the size of cottages. And the humps moved and swelled till they burst, and the crumbled earth poured out of them, and from each hump there came out an animal. The moles came out just as you might see a mole come out in England. The dogs came out, barking the moment their heads were free, and struggling as you've seen them do when they are getting through a narrow hole in a hedge... The frogs, who all came up near the river, went straight into it with a plop-plop and a loud croaking. The panthers, leopards and things of that sort, sat down at once to wash the loose earth off their hind quarters and then stood up against the trees to sharpen their front claws. Showers of birds came out of the trees. Butterflies fluttered. Bees got to work on the flowers as if they hadn't a second to lose. But the greatest moment of all was when the biggest hump broke like a small earthquake and out came the sloping back, the large, wise head, and the four baggy-trouser legs of an Elephant. And now you could hardly hear the song of the Lion; there was so much cawing, cooing, crowing,...neighing...barking, ...bleating, and trumpeting...

...And now, for the first time, the Lion was quite silent. He was going to and fro among the animals. And every now and then he would go up to two of them (always two at a time) and touch their noses with his. He would touch two beavers among all the beavers, two leopards among all the leopards, one stag and one deer among all the deer, and leave the rest. Some sorts of animal he passed over altogether. But the pairs which he had touched instantly left their own kinds and followed him. At

last he stood still and all the creatures whom he had touched came and stood in a wide circle around him. The others whom he had not touched began to wander away. Their noises faded gradually into the distance. The chosen beasts who remained were now utterly silent, all with their eyes fixed intently upon the Lion...

The Lion, whose eyes never blinked, stared at the animals as hard as if he was going to burn them up with his mere stare. And gradually a change came over them. The smaller ones - the rabbits, moles and such-like - grew a good deal larger. The very big ones - you noticed it most with the elephants - grew a little smaller. Many animals sat up on their hind legs. Most put their heads on one side as if they were trying very hard to understand. The Lion opened his mouth, but no sound came from it; he was breathing out, a long, warm breath; it seemed to sway all the beasts as the wind sways a line of trees. Far overhead from beyond the veil of blue sky which hid them, the stars sang again: a pure, cold, difficult music. Then there came a swift flash like fire (but it burnt nobody) either from the sky or from the Lion itself, and every drop of blood tingled in the children's bodies, and the deepest, wildest voice they had ever heard was saying:

"Narnia, Narnia, Narnia, awake. Love. Think. Speak. Be walking trees. Be talking beasts. Be divine waters..."

In the Collect for the Day and the First Lesson, we heard about the 'eternal harmony of gift and response,' about Wisdom's voice calling us to life and her presence alongside God as the world was created; in our music we 'sing praise' and give glory; and in the Eucharistic Prayer, just before we sing the Sanctus, we will say, *"Therefore we join the eternal song of power and glory shared, of communion and integrity, of difference and delight."*

What matters most about the Trinity is not whether our descriptions are correct, but that they are beautiful and touch the heart.