

## *TRINITY SUNDAY 2020*

*Sermon by. The Rev. Ralph W. Bayfield, D.Min.+ June 7, 2020  
Trinity Episcopal Church, Martinsburg, West Virginia  
Church of the Good Shepherd, Pine Grove, Bluemont, Virginia*

The world has witnessed on Television the murder of the black man, George Floyd in Minneapolis, Minnesota by a white Police Officer. While Mr. Floyd had been apprehended for supposedly breaking a law, the inhuman treatment of the arrest has stoked the racial fires causing our black fellow Americans to cry out, “I can’t breathe, get your knee off my throat!” In a memorial service, The Rev. Al Sharpton in his sermon accused people of the white race of holding black people down for centuries and exclaimed: “Get your knee off of my neck!” There have been numerous instances of black people getting murdered by white people in authority. It is not possible in this sermon to give an extensive historical recollection of the numerous immoral activities and injustices that have come between the two races of humankind in America.

However, this is Trinity Sunday, a time when we are inspired to look at God and the world in terms of “Threes.” So let’s consider the black and white races of America and see how a “Triune” world of three historical ages might be considered times of togetherness.

*Age One* would start with the kidnapping and enslavement of African people who were transported to America in 1619: *Age Two* would include the flight for freedom with leading people like the abolitionist Frederick Douglas, the great orator who said “There is no power without struggle,” and Harriet Tubman who started and operated the underground railroad. She got many people away from the inhumanity of slavery to relative freedom in the north. Abraham Lincoln, who wrote the emancipation of the slaves in the south, and the civil war would be included in this second time.

*Age Three* would be our modern life of Martin Luther King, the civil rights era of the sixties, the Presidency of Barack Obama, and tragically today the funeral services of George Floyd who had died of asphyxiation from the policeman's knee on his throat. George Floyd should never have died. There are many others who have died after being shot by police.

While watching the demonstrations of peaceful protesting, I was most distressed to see an elderly man attempt to speak to a policeman in a line of officers stretching across the street. The police were marching with clubs to force the protesters off the street. The man, attempting to speak was struck on the head by the officer, causing him to fall and lose blood which spilled on the concrete. One officer who stopped to help him was pulled away by another officer and the police marched on. Eventually, protesters came to the fallen old man's aid.

The FBI, CIA and many government agencies, local and nationally over the years have been involved in attempting to safeguard legitimate demonstrations. Personally, I was chosen by Bishop Mosely, to be one of the representatives of the Diocese of Delaware to go to Selma, Alabama. We went to work with Martin Luther King in the demonstrations for opportunity and voting rights in that state. As we were marching along, I asked the person next to me, who he was and what he did. He replied FBI! I was glad to have him next to me in that tense situation! The Voting Rights Act of 1965 was passed, enabling all people to vote. Ironically years later, my Senior Warden of the church in Virginia where I was Rector, defended my protesting in his home town of Selma, saying it was necessary.

In most demonstrations, there are usually three basic groups of people. In one group are the protestors. In another group are people who use the event to loot stores, houses and buildings to steal merchandise for themselves. I'm told they get a thrill out of breaking windows in stores or cars. Unfortunately the latter group, gets most of the attention and they are backed by outside gangs, entities and even foreign countries. The CIA gathered evidence that the Russians used the Internet to recruit people for the candidate of their choice in the 2016 U.S. elections. The third group of people in the demonstrations are the police, there to protect all people.

Most important included in the third stage of our present Triune world must be constructive occasions of reviewing and revising the procedures for police operations. Most of our police are good, dedicated, loyal, caring people, many with families. Changes for the better have already begun in many jurisdictions. Already in Minneapolis, a rule was passed to prohibit holds around the neck by police when making arrests. We need to continue the involvement and building of mutually caring racial interactions. We need to bring ourselves together with people of all races in harmonious friendly and loving relationships.

In our local area, on Thursday of this week, the Virginia Interfaith Center for Public Policy, a downtown Winchester clergy fellowship and Shenandoah Valley Interfaith Council, issued a statement citing Virginia's history and involvement in racism. They spoke out for a stand against racism, the attitude of white supremacy and the horrible inhumane violence that accompany it. The statement, a copy which is included as an

addendum to this sermon is signed by thirty-three clergy of Christian, Jewish, and Islamic faiths.<sup>1</sup>

Also included as another addendum item are excerpts from a letter by The Rev. Churchill Gibson, Rector of Christ Church, Winchester to his parishioners about the President's use of St. John's Church, Lafayette Square, as a backdrop for a photographic promotion. I felt this letter was well written and most informative of the issues of the racism that are relevant today.

Now to continue the sermon, what about the Trinity and our experience of One God in three persons, Father Son and Holy Spirit.

The Biblical text for Trinity Sunday comes from the Second Letter of Paul to the Corinthians 13:14. "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with us all evermore." This is a prayer, not a benediction. It does not include a blessing. It was inserted to be the thankful prayer after the Litany in the Prayer Book of 1559 and added to the Daily Offices of Morning and Evening Prayer in the Prayer Book of 1662. It serves both as a final doxology by its naming of the Holy Trinity, and as a prayer for the chief gifts and graces of the Three Persons: The Son's favor towards us in His redeeming act: The Father's love; and the Spirit's bond, uniting us in fellowship one with another and communicating God's love and Christ's grace among us in His Body, the Church.<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> *Winchester Star, Friday June 5, 2020; page A-3*

<sup>2</sup> *Shepherd, Massey Hamilton, Jr.;The Oxford American Prayer Book Commentary;Oxford University Press, New York 1950, page 20*

Actually there may have been three or more Corinthian letters that were written. In addition to *I Corinthians*, there are at least two letters that compose the Biblical book known as *II Corinthians*. The “first letter” of *II Corinthians 1:1 to 9:15*, which actually may be more than one letter, has been called a “*Thankful Letter*.” A second letter *II Corinthians 10:1 to 13 : 10* has been called a “*Stern Letter*.”<sup>3</sup> The final Exhortation and Greeting, our text for today’s sermon,<sup>4</sup> concludes Paul’s *II Corinthians 13:11-14*.

In great agitation Paul wrote the *Stern Letter* in 57 A.D.. At Corinth a major metropolis, there was a group of Apostles, not members of the twelve, from Jerusalem who were strict Jews in addition to being Christians. They insisted on continuing to follow the customs of the Jews, a practice which Paul had earlier said was not necessary in his Letter to the *Galatians*. Here, the primary problem Paul had with these “Super Apostles” was that they selfishly robbed offerings, neglecting to give them to the poor and needy. Most important, they refused to recognize Paul as an Apostle. He must defend himself and his ministry. Paul cites the revelations from God that have come to him. We learn of Paul’s work, feelings and faith.

Paul is given a thorn in the flesh<sup>5</sup> which he calls a “messenger from Satan,” and prays to have it removed, but the Lord refused saying: “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.”<sup>6</sup> Paul goes on to boast of his weakness, that the power of Christ may rest

---

<sup>3</sup> Buttrick, George Arthur, Editor, Craig, Clarence: Exegesis. *Interpreter’s Bible, Volume 12, II Corinthians*; Abingdon Cokesbury Press, Nashville, TN, 1953, pages 266-268

<sup>4</sup> *ibid. II Corinthians 13:14 page 424*

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid. II Corinthians 12:7f page 407*

<sup>6</sup> *ibid. II Corinthians 12:9 pages 408-409*

upon him. In Chapter 13, Paul announces his intent to visit them for the third time. He had started the church at Corinth and he challenges the faith of these rigid “fellow Christians.” Paul warns the other Christians about judging people too severely.

This *Thankful Letter* enables Paul to go to Corinth without fear of repudiation. After ministering in Macedonia Paul will return to Corinth. Here, he looks forward to completing the collection for the needy and being received with warm affectionate counsel in Corinth. This is the most personal of all of Paul’s letters, the one that reveals his heart and purpose.<sup>7</sup>

Paul spoke of grace, love and divine friendship to the Corinthian church people. These words are used by both Anglicans and Episcopalians as a closing prayer for both Morning and Evening Prayer services.

J.B. Phillips, modern New Testament Scholar translated Paul’s words, “Finally, then, my brothers (and sisters), cheer up! Straighten yourselves out, comfort yourselves, agree with one another and live at peace. So shall the God of love and peace be ever with you. A handshake all around, please! All Christians here send greeting. The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship that is ours in the Holy Spirit be with you all!”<sup>8</sup> AMEN

---

<sup>7</sup> *ibid* II Corinthians page 268

<sup>8</sup> II Corinthians 13:11-14 J.B.Phillips translation, quoted in Killinger Sermon, 1st Sunday after Pentecost (Trinity); June 6, 1993, Toronto, ON, page 1