All About Identity

Rev. Kyle Cuperwich

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Year B, Trinity Sunday
Romans 8:12-17
Grace Episcopal Church, Pemberton and St. Martin-in-the-Fields, Lumberton, NJ

Today is Trinity Sunday. It is a day that I always found to be a bit strange. It's as if the people who designed the liturgical calendar just threw this day on their because they wanted to have something to commemorate after Pentecost. Plus, it is a day that can increase the anxiety of the preacher. The preacher can be tempted to preach on the Trinity today, a very complex and mysterious doctrine. How can anyone preach about God being one in three persons without going into heresy?

The more I thought about it, however, that more I realized that the meaning of Trinity Sunday is actually quite simple. Trinity Sunday is all about identity. We celebrate the fact that God identifies God's self as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. And this identity has implications on what God does; God is the parent who creates all things, the redeemer who seeks us out when we are lost, and the sustainer through the Spirit who gives us life. A day that focuses on God's identity naturally calls us to focus on our identity. What are some of the different labels you use to identify yourself? In my case, I'm an Episcopalian, a priest, a father, a brother, a son, and American citizen, and if you look at my ancestry, I'm part Italian, Polish, Lithuanian, and Portuguese. We all bring our identity to the table, and our labels have implications about who we are and what we do.

On this Trinity Sunday, however, we are challenged to remember our ultimate identity. It is an identity that rises above all others. It's an identity that Paul writes about in Romans 8, a glorious chapter that talks about life in the Spirit. He writes, "All who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God…When we cry, 'Abba! Father!' it is that very Spirit bearing witness with our Spirit that we are children of God." This identity as a child of God implies a lot about who we are; we are chosen, loved, cherished, and adopted as God's own above all else! It also has implications about when we do. Our Baptismal Covenant in the Prayer Book nicely summarizes what we do as children of God. We continue in the apostle's teachings that have been passed down to us. We preserve in resisting evil and turn to the Lord when we mess up. We proclaim the gospel through our words and example. We seek out and serve Christ in every person we meet. We strive for justice and peace in all we do.

We live in a world that is saturated with identity, in a world that loves to divide us by our identity. Whether it's by political identity, where we are from, who we love, you name it, our culture loves to divide us by identity, and those identities can often try to pull us from our ultimate identity as God's child. On this day, we are called to rise above the pressure of this world and live out our identity as God's child in the fullest. Rowan Williams sums this up beautifully in his book *Being Disciples*, when he writes, "To sustain 'life in the Spirit' under pressure, we need to retain the ability to say to God, 'Tell me who I am.' I'm not going to settle with what everyone else is telling me—I'm not even going to settle with what I am telling me. I need

to hear it from God, the God who tells me."[1] God has told every one of us that we are God's child, and that through baptism we are marked as Christ's own forever. Let us go from this place and live like it. Amen.

[1] Rowan Williams. *Being Disciples: Essentials of the Christian Life* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2016), pg. 80