

Sermon Notes from the Church's Ministry Among Jewish People

Trinity Sunday – Year B

RCL Readings – Isaiah 6:1-8; Psalm 29; Romans 8:12-17; John 3:1-17

ACNA Readings – Exodus 3:1-6; Psalm 93; Romans 8:12-17; John 3:1-16

Seasonal Introduction. In the Western Christian calendar, Trinity Sunday is the first Sunday after Pentecost, while in the Eastern Christian tradition the Sunday of Pentecost itself is called Trinity Sunday. Typically, Sundays in the Church calendar are dedicated to specific events, such as the Transfiguration and Baptism of Jesus, or to Biblical heroes like All Saints day. Trinity Sunday is one of the few Sundays in the Church calendar that is devoted to a Christian doctrine. God is a mystery, and no concept of God is more mysterious than the concept of the Trinity. While the word Trinity is not in the Bible, the mystery of God's nature is.¹

Common Theme. Trinity Sunday is the day assigned to the preaching of God and His mysterious trinitarian nature. Most preachers are happy that Trinity Sunday only comes around once a year. For if you talk about the Trinity for longer than 5 minutes it's highly likely you are now entering into heresy. Describing the nature of God is not rocket science, it's more difficult than that. We can put a man on the moon, but we can't fully describe the majesty of God. The word trinity does not appear in the Bible and only first came into use in the 3rd Century by Tertullian of Carthage (present day Tunisia). While the word *Trinity* is not in the Bible the mystery of God's nature is. The Apostle Paul reminds us that there is one God and one Lord in (1 Corinthians 8:6). We only have one God, so what do we do with this Father-Son-Spirit thing? The nature of God truly is a mystery. And those early mysteries can already be found in the Hebrew Scripture, but the New Testament still doesn't make everything perfectly clear.

Hebraic Context. Mystery. The Hebrew Bible loves mystery and to hold things in tension. The Bible describes mystery as the glory of God. Many times in the sacred texts a prophet speaks, or the Lord declares a thing or a prayer is prayed by one of the heroes of the Bible and then left unanalyzed and not expounded. The ancient Hebrew mind was content to dwell on the mystery and the Bible will often allow a mystery to pan out over thousands of years before it can be explained. King David says in the Psalms 'I meditate on your Word, day and night', he doesn't say he solves it. In contrast, the Greek mind does not do well with Mystery. They, and we through our own culture, have the constant compulsion to solve everything. Most minds in modernity dislike an unsolved mystery.

An important example of mystery occurs in the prophet Isaiah 48:12-16.

שִׁמַע אֵלַי יַעֲקֹב, וְיִשְׂרָאֵל מִקְרָאִי: אֲנִי-הוּא אֲנִי רִאשׁוֹן, אֲף אֲנִי אֶחָדוֹן

“Listen to me, O Jacob, and Israel, whom I called! I am He, I am the First and I am the Last”

¹ With all our scholarship we will not know Him for who He is until we see Him face to face although He remains who He is. Nonetheless, “It is the glory of God to conceal things, but the glory of kings to search things out.” (Proverbs 25:2)

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The passage began with a powerful Hebrew word שְׁמַע 'Shma'. *Shma* means listen or hear in the imperative form and when you heard the word *Shma* you thought of the Oath of Loyalty to the King of the Universe known as the *Shma*.² "Hear Oh Israel, the Lord is our God, the Lord alone".³ It's a powerful start to the passage and demands attention.

This declaration occurred during the time of Isaiah. Who is the First and the Last? At the time of the prophet Isaiah, no one knew who this title belonged to, in fact, the assumption with a casual reading would have been that it belonged to God—"Hear O Israel, the Lord is our God, the Lord alone." The First and the Last laid the foundations of the world, ordered the universe, is supernatural in power, and when He calls the Heavens and the Earth they stand up for Him. The answer to the question, "Who made the Heavens and the Earth?" is, of course, God. In Isaiah the First and the Last creates the World and thus the First and the Last must also be God. Case solved right? No! Not so easy. The Mystery now begins to unfold. For Isaiah 48:16 states that, "וְעַתָּה, אֲדַנִּי יְהוָה שְׁלַחַנִי וְרוּחוֹ" "And now, the Lord GOD has sent me, and His Spirit."⁴

Suddenly we learn that the Lord GOD is not the First and the Last but rather the one that sent the First and the Last. But we know that the Lord GOD is the one who created all things, the LORD is also God alone, and finally, the First and the Last, who is not the LORD, created the heavens and the earth. What a mystery. Oh, and there is also the Spirit of GOD.

While Jesus was on the planet He titled Himself as the Son of Man, an allusion to the eschatological figure in Daniel 7. But both the Gospel writers and Apostles declare that Jesus

² Hebrew was predominantly an oral language. Certain words would be connected to core ideas, religion (including scripture), and history. If the Levites, communities, or families listened to God and taught their sons and daughters about their God, שְׁמַע *shma* was, perhaps, the word most commonly associated with obedience to God.

³ The concept that God's nature is a divine unity is not a Christian invention. In the Agudat Israel Jewish Siddur (Prayerbook) page 13 the Sh'ma יהוה אלהינו יהוה אחד is translated as Hear O'Israel the Eternal our God is an Eternal unity. There is no explanation as to what the word 'unity' means although it could refer to both a composite unity or a single unity. In Jewish circles the Sh'ma has been more commonly translated as "Hear Oh Israel, the Lord our God is the Lord alone" which focuses more on His uniqueness than His nature.

⁴ Isaiah 48:16 starts softly with a call to "Come close", then the word *shma* appears again, "קִרְבוּ אֵלַי" "שְׁמַעוּ-זֶאת" linking the passage together with the previous verses. "לֹא מֵרֵאשִׁית בְּסֵתֶר דִּבַּרְתִּי" "Not since the beginning have I spoken in secret?" The question is asked (although perhaps not answered, see also Proverbs 25:2, "It is the glory of God to conceal הַסְתֵּר things, but the glory of kings is to search things out.) The word for 'speak' is the same word as 'word', דִּבֶּר, which is also the same word for 'thing'. So, if we don't divide the word into the single English translation we think it should be, the word is also a thing. Then in Hebrew we have מֵעַתָּה הַיּוֹתָם. Which literally means "from the time that was, or from the beginning". נֶשְׁמָא אֲנִי means "I was there". וְעַתָּה means "and I am there now". יְהוָה שְׁלַחַנִי means "My Lord *Yahweh* (God) has sent me". וְרוּחוֹ means "and also His Spirit (is sent)".

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was also the creator of the universe. As Christians who have read through the Bible, we know that Jesus called Himself the First and the Last—but only at the end of Revelation. It took around 800 years for this mystery to be (partially) revealed. And even today this mystery is still disputed and barely understood and may not be fully understood until God reveals Himself more fully, whether that is tomorrow or another 2,000+ years.

Isaiah 6:1-8. Isaiah seems to have been called to be a prophet towards the end of King Uzziah's reign.⁵ As the monarchy of a good and wise king came to a close, Isaiah had a vision experience in which he saw into the throne room of heaven and encountered the Lord. As we know from other passages of Scripture, no man has seen God. So how, and what, did Isaiah see?⁶ ⁷ Isaiah doesn't tell us, only speaking of the peripheral—the very edge of a garment and the beings around God.

Around the throne of God are beings called *seraphim*, in Hebrew literally “burning ones.” *Seraphim* are only mentioned in the Bible in this chapter of Isaiah.⁸ These angelic beings call to one another, not to God. They declare among themselves, “Holy, Holy, Holy” (*קדוֹשׁ קדוֹשׁ קדוֹשׁ*, *kadosh*). Why repeat this declaration three times? In Hebrew, emphasis and intensity are communicated by the use of repetition. God is infinitely holy, and this holiness is emphasized through repetition.⁹ Along with the seraphim, we too should personally declare the holiness of God to one another and to the world. The vision Isaiah wrote about creates more mystery than it

⁵ The long history and reign of King Uzziah of Judah is found in 2 Chronicles 26. He began his rule aged 16 years following the murder of his father Amaziah in a coup. He is mostly renowned for being a good king with his reign spanning a lengthy 52 years. Uzziah was a man of faith, a seeker after the Lord, and was accompanied by the prophet Zechariah. However, he allowed sacrifice in the high places within the kingdom and suffered from pride in his later life as He tried to act as a priest. He finished his reign with leprosy because of his hubris.

Uzziah was also known as Azariah in the earlier histories of the book of Kings. Uzziah means ‘God is my strength’ while Azariah means ‘God is my helper’.

⁶ The glory of God and light are commonly associated in Hebrew. Moses asked to see the glory of God in Exodus 33 and God not only passes His glory in front of Moses but also His goodness. Nonetheless, Moses was hidden by the hand of God from seeing the face of God lest he die. Having seen the back of God (another mystery), Moses himself shone as he descended the mountain and met with the Israelites. Stephen too, when he saw into heaven, saw the glory of God—although He also saw the Son of Man standing at God's right hand. John 12:41 states that Isaiah, “saw His glory and spoke of Him”.

⁷ The verb *ראַה* *ra'ah* can also mean ‘perceive’ or ‘consider’ and not only the sight we receive with our physical eyes.

⁸ Presumably *seraphim* are part of the angelic hosts along with the four living creatures mentioned in Revelation 4. Much has been written about the angelic beings although little is known about them.

⁹ This is not a proof text of the triune nature of the Godhead, rather, it provides a glimpse of God's character. He is uniquely holy. Although there is always mystery to be sought out, but not known.

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provides clarification.¹⁰ However, we can still declare the holiness of God, give God the glory due Him,¹¹ and become His messengers to the world even if we do not fully understand God.

Psalm 29.¹² David boldly commanded the heavenly beings to give glory and honour to the LORD. How could David do this? Throughout the Psalm it should be made abundantly clear that all things (including us) should give God the glory and honour that is due Him.

David used the term the “Voice of the Lord” 7 times in this psalm. Reflective of the opening lines in Genesis and the creation week. David also used God’s personal name ‘*Yahweh*’ 18 times and His name would later be paired with His voice. When the Lord speaks He does so through a variety of ways. God has, on occasion, spoken directly with people; at other times He communicates His desires in dreams and through the mouths of prophets. Angels have often been the messengers of the divine voice. Scripture continues to be the word of the Lord that can be heard everyday. Even nature itself can be the vehicle for how God speaks. Sometimes the voice of the Lord is found in the quiet stillness and sometimes He is in the burning bush.

In this psalm, David described the strength and power of a storm and likened it to the voice of God. Some of the language in the psalm echoed the Creation event of Genesis. ‘The voice of the Lord is over the waters’ (verse 3) resonates with the Spirit of God hovering over the depths

¹⁰ Isaiah and Daniel have some differences in their visions. Isaiah only mentions one throne and one being, the Lord—later called GOD by the seraphim. Daniel 7 states that there is more than one throne and spoke about both the Ancient of Days and the Son of Man. Revelation mentions a myriad of people who will stand before both the throne, singular, but also the Lamb.

Another question is whether Isaiah is seeing the preincarnate Jesus on the throne or the Father. John 12:41 does declare that Isaiah saw the glory [of Jesus?] and spoke of Him, but it does so after quoting other verses—of which Isaiah has many that speak of the coming Messiah, Immanuel. And what of the Spirit that is spoken of in Isaiah 48:16?

If we knew the answers to all these questions, would we be better equipped to declare God’s holiness? Would we be better at giving God glory? Or, like Adam and Eve, would we believe that we could be wise—be like God, knowing good and evil. Would we, like the children in the wilderness who saw the cloud in which God descended, continue to grumble and complain? Would we, like the disciples who walked with Jesus for three (or more) years, abandon Him when confronted with suffering? Sometimes, like Isaiah, perhaps we should simply see our own sin and be ready to go and be His witness if God tells us to (and He has told us to be His witnesses).

¹¹ The *seraphim* also declare, “the whole earth is full of His glory.” Interestingly, Jesus, in His prayer, declares that all those God gave to Him can glorify Him, “I am glorified in them.” Just as God is shown to be king when His people follow His rule, so too the earth can be full of God’s glory when His people glorify Him. Jesus will be glorified in the saints, and part of that seems to be through the testimony of His saints worked out in this world. (II Thessalonians 1:5-12)

¹² A psalm of David. Both historical (the flood) and geographical (a mighty storm striking the northern levant) references are made within the Psalm to declare the power of God.

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at the Beginning. The voice of the Lord is paralleled with the Lord Himself as 'The Lord sits enthroned over the Flood' (verse 10). The Flood of Noah was a cataclysmic event of darkness and destruction, yet God ruled over that violent event. Many of the most powerful forces experienced by those in antiquity were forces of nature; earthquakes, thunderstorms and raging seas. Elemental nature was, and largely still is, completely out of the control of humans. David reminds us that the Lord is in control of all of His creation.

Romans 8:12-17. Lineage and family relationships are an important concept in the Scriptures.¹³ Lineage plays an important role in defining the identity of a person, a community, and a nation. When God introduced Himself to Moses at the Burning Bush He did so by telling Moses He is "the God of your father" (Exodus 3:6). Surely this is a reference to Moses' Hebrew father and not to Pharaoh or his Egyptian gods. The Lord explained further that He is the God of the Patriarchs: Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Later, God Himself is described as a father for the first time in Deuteronomy 32:6.

When Israel left Egypt they became part of a family, they became the 'son' of God. As Hosea 11:1 says "When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son". As the creator and the first cause, God is the God of all. But He also chose to be a Father.

Paul reminded us in Romans 8:14 that one of the attributes of sonship, that is, being a son of God the Father, relates to being led by the Spirit. God desires an intimate relationship with us defined as the relationship of adopted sons to a loving father. The mystery of salvation involves the work of the Spirit that is poured out at Pentecost, described here by Paul as the Spirit of adoption. The mystery is that we are more than just "saved"; we become part of a holy family. While not describing God as a triune being, all participants in the Trinity, or the Godhead, are mentioned in this short passage. The Spirit bears witness that we are now children of God the Father and inheritors of those blessings along with the Messiah.

John 3:1-17. The night encounter between Nicodemus, a Pharisee of the Sanhedrin, and Jesus is a familiar story for many of us. At the beginning of the meeting Nicodemus acknowledged Jesus as a Rabbi and admitted that many people were impressed with Him, saying, "we know

¹³ Ezra 2 states that, among the returning exiles, were a number of priests. "These sought their registration among those enrolled in the genealogies, but they were not found there, and so they were excluded from the priesthood as unclean. The governor told them that they were not to partake of the most holy food, until there should be a priest to consult Urim and Thummim. (See Mishnah Kiddushin 3.12-4.11 for an extended look at lineage in regards to the Priests, Levites, and the general Jewish populace.)

The lineage of Abraham, David, Zechariah, Jesus, Paul, and Anna, among many others, were all recorded in Scripture. This was not by accident.

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You are a teacher who has come from God".¹⁴ Jesus responded by making a point about the Kingdom of Heaven מלכות שמים (also referred to as the Kingdom of God) and its entrance by being 'born again'.

This might seem a strange conversation to non-Jewish ears. However, terms like the Kingdom of Heaven and being born again were very Jewish concepts that arose during the late 2nd Temple period.¹⁵ How much knowledge of these important theological concepts Nicodemus had at the time of his encounter with Jesus is not known, but Jesus clearly criticized his lack of understanding. When Nicodemus failed to connect water baptism and the Holy Spirit with new birth Jesus said, "Are you the teacher of Israel, and do not know these things?"¹⁶

Jesus proceeded to speak of the Son of Man, a title He used about Himself in other encounters, to proclaim His own authority to teach and do the things of God. The eschatological figure called the Son of Man was first introduced to us in the vision of Daniel 7.¹⁷ He appeared as an eschatological character, distinct from God—the Ancient of Days—standing in heaven. There he is adorned with authority, worshipped, and given a kingdom. Daniel does not seek to explain how or why the Son of Man is worshipped or how he relates to God. The mystery is left to be pondered, not solved. During the Second Temple period, the Son of Man became a messianic figure amongst some Jewish commentators and particularly the Dead Sea Scroll community.

Jesus continued His conversation with Nicodemus by allegorizing the serpent in the wilderness (from Numbers 21) as a picture of the Messiah and his ministry. Jesus stated that the Son of Man must be lifted up.^{18 19} In John's Gospel, God's love and compassion for the world he

¹⁴ It is not clear who are the 'we' that Nicodemus is referring to. As a member of the Sanhedrin, Nicodemus may be acknowledging that many of the religious elites viewed the ministry of Jesus as being supported by heaven (similar to Acts 6:7 in regards to the priests, "and a great many of the priests became obedient to the faith."). Or simply that the work and teaching of Jesus was generally held as positive by the general public.

¹⁵ See Hebraic Perspective.

¹⁶ The great prophet of this time, John the Baptizer, spoke on his own work of baptizing with water but another would come, "This is he who baptizes with the Holy Spirit." 1QS III.3-9 argued that baptism, or ritual cleansing, could hardly be sufficient and so the Holy Spirit also needed to be present at baptism. In the late 2nd Temple Period, the belief in God's presence—His Spirit (although not thought of as the part of the Trinity at this point)—at baptism was a common assumption.

¹⁷ *Ben Adam*, or child of Adam (man), was a common term for a human being—such as found in Ezekiel. But Daniel 7 was well known for speaking of something far more by the end of the 2nd Temple period (in the Aramaic, *Bar Enosh* rather than *Ben Adam*).

¹⁸ Again, by this point in the 2nd Temple period, Nicodemus should have known about the Jewish traditions that linked the Son of Man with the Messiah. However, perplexingly to many, the Messiah in Daniel 9:24-26 is 'cut off', indicating a sudden death.

¹⁹ John seems to use the term 'lifted up' ὑψωσεν (*hypsoon*) slightly differently to the other Gospel writers and the Epistles. The context of John's nuance of ὑψωσεν is clearest in John 12:32-34 to signify the

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created compelled him to send the Son in the act of redemption. Yet the Spirit also plays a role in bringing people into the kingdom through “new birth.” The unity of God is reflected in the active participation of redemption by all aspects of the Trinity. It is mysterious, not easily understood and yet John 3:16 may be the most known verse in the Bible. “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life”.

Unfortunately, often our understanding of belief is purely intellectual. Belief is not only doctrines but also the active participation in those doctrines. Perhaps a better reading might be ‘whoever is *believing* in Him will not perish but has eternal life’.²⁰ This verse again demonstrates that love, like trust, is an action. God loves and so God sends.²¹

Hebraic Perspective. Baptism has a long tradition within Judaism and did not originate with John the Baptist. The concept of the *mikveh*, the Jewish ritual bath, is already present in the Torah. Following the exodus from Egypt, God instructed the Israelites, particularly the priesthood, to participate in ritual washing of the body as an act of purification. Ritual washing was required for women following childbirth, a person coming into contact with the dead, and after discharges from the body (among other things).

Leviticus does not call the ritual washing a baptism. However, Leviticus does demonstrate that ritual and ceremonial cleansing is important to the Lord. Following the destruction of the Temple and during the 2nd Temple period further theological developments occurred around the function and purpose of the *mikveh*. The practice of *tevilah* טְבִילָה or ritual immersion was embraced by the Jewish people as a communal participation in holiness, purity and restoration.

crucifixion but could also apply to His ascension and exaltation in other passages (such as Acts 2:33, 5:31).

²⁰ John never uses the word faith πίστις *pistis* in the Gospel (it is only found once in I John 5:4). Rather, John constantly uses the cognate πιστεύω *pisteuō* (belief) which carries with it the meaning of trust in something as well being convinced that something is true. The book of Genesis likewise does not include the word faith but rather describes the Biblical characters trusting and believing God, for example “Abraham believed God”. For both Abraham and the continuation of Jesus’ dialogue with Nicodemus, this belief is paired with actions as belief and trust aren’t passive.

²¹ Not only is our belief continuous, Jesus continued His conversation with Nicodemus by describing how the light has come into the world. The Greek text describes a continual action, that is, the light has come and is still coming into the world to chase away the darkness. God loves the world but men love the darkness. Why do men love darkness and not the light? Jesus says it is because their deeds are evil. So, because God truly loves His creation He sent the Son while men trust in darkness and so do evil deeds. While John 3:16 is very well known, Jesus’ final statement to Nicodemus is John 3:21, “Whoever does what is true comes to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that his works have been carried out to God”. Jesus exhorts us to ‘do the truth’. We are not only told to believe the truth, we are told to do the truth. Belief in Jesus implies an action to put that trust into practice and seek the light.

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And its use within the community grew and widened in function. The waters of the *mikveh*, or baptism were the physical application of something spiritual.

At Qumran the Dead Sea community understood the Holy Spirit to be an active participant during baptism, for without God's grace, water could only wipe away the dirt.²² But water and the Spirit were often connected regarding the cleansing of the righteous of their sins. When a gentile converted to Judaism through baptism, the rabbi's stated they were reborn.²³ The convert was now a completely different person, having gone from being a Gentile to now being Jewish and a son of Abraham. All former relationships were null and void (reminding the newly born man that the old man had died in the waters of the *mikveh*).

ACNA Readings

Exodus 3:1-6. Initially Moses does not strike us as the quintessential hero figure. Following his miraculous rescue from the Nile as an infant, Moses is raised in Pharaoh's household most likely surrounded by the wealthy elite. Despite this privileged upbringing Moses displays some unfortunate character flaws which don't portray him as very heroic. He has anger management issues, resorts to violence and murder, chooses not to face justice and instead flees Egypt to the land of Midian. Nonetheless, Moses had settled down and married, spending 40 years raising a family. Returning to Egypt was not high on his priority list.

At this point Jewish exegesis asks the question: when is Moses ready to lead the people of Israel out of Egypt? Apparently Moses has not become independently wealthy in Midian.²⁴ Exodus 3 begins by telling us Moses is shepherding his father-in-law's flocks, not his own. Additionally, Moses had to take the flock to the far side of the desert.²⁵ Moses did not begin his career as a shepherd. He was raised into Egyptian royalty and was not likely accustomed to hard manual labour. But now Moses shepherded a flock of sheep, willing to go out of his way to feed and take care of them.²⁶

²² 1QS III.3-9

²³ *Yevamot* 22a.8-10

²⁴ Midian is a descendent of Abraham through his second wife Keturah. It is possible that some Midianites had held on to the monotheistic faith of Abraham and thus Jethro's family, who also bears the name Reuel (Exodus 2:18) with the meaning: 'Shepherd of God' are actually God-fearers.

²⁵ There are several traditions and many scholars who argue where the Mountain of God is, but it seems to be somewhat distant from the land of Midian itself. Horeb is the more common designation for Mount Sinai in the Bible with some scholars, based on Jewish tradition, suggesting one side of the mountain was known as Horeb and the other as Sinai.

²⁶ Exodus Rabbah 2.2 states that while shepherding the flock, one sheep wandered away and got lost. Moses left the rest of the flock to seek and return the lost sheep. Not only did Moses find the sheep, he ensured the sheep received water—for the sheep had wandered away not to rebel but because it was thirsty. Following this event, God chose to meet Moses at the burning bush, for God had seen the

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While working in his capacity as a shepherd, Moses became intrigued by a bush burning with fire—but not being consumed by that fire. Moses drew closer to investigate. God called to Moses from out of the flames.²⁷ When God first speaks to Moses, He calls him by name. Moses may have fled the palace of Egypt and become an obscure forgotten shepherd, but God had not forgotten Moses.

When God called Moses to lead the people of Israel out of Egypt he was a shepherd. Having answered the call from the Lord, Moses actually remained a shepherd—although now a shepherd of people. In Psalm 77:20 we read that; “You led your people like a flock by the hand of Moses and Aaron.”²⁸

Psalm 93.²⁹ Similar to Psalm 29, Psalm 93 makes use of the seeming power of things in creation to prove the awesomeness of the God who sits enthroned above those things man has no control over. “Pride comes before the fall” is a well-known saying from Proverbs 16:18. Yet for all the negative connotations of the word pride in humanity, pride is a characteristic of God Himself.

Verse 1 declares that “The Lord is king, He is robed with majesty.” The Hebrew actually says the Lord is clothed with “pride” (תִּוְאָה). We, the descendants of Adam, must not be proud. Not only does our pride lead to evil intentions, but what reason can we give to be proud? God can be proud. He can even wrap himself in pride. He made the world and he alone can boast in its beauty. After all, when He had made the world He did say it was good. God can sit on the throne in heaven and be majestic—and his pride leads only to good. When Moses was on the mountain with God, he asked to see the glory of God. Instead, God said he would show Moses his goodness (Exodus 33:19). The Lord reigns and his reign is a good one.

compassion of Moses over one small lost sheep—the humble and caring shepherd was ready to be a hero to lead a new flock

²⁷ It is not always clear who is actually conversing with Moses. Mysteriously the Hebrew text inter-changes the words ‘LORD (הוה)’) and the ‘Angel of the LORD (מלאך הוה)’) without explanation. An angel appears but it is the Lord who speaks.

Several Christian scholars have tried to prove that the Angel of the Lord was Jesus. On Trinity Sunday, this would be an excellent preaching point. However, there are other passages, such as Acts 7:30-53, which seem to point towards the Angel of the LORD being just that, an angel. Stephen seemingly makes no effort to argue that Jesus was the angel that appeared to Moses in the burning bush, although it would fit well with his speech. Like many things regarding the Trinity, some things are difficult to prove one way or the other and remain a mystery—although we search it out to the best of our ability.

²⁸ Psalm 77 and 78 both finish by describing how a hero of the faith, Moses and Aaron in Psalm 77 and David in Psalm 78, became a shepherd to God's flock.

²⁹ No author is attributed to this short psalm dedicated to the rule and reign of the Lord.

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