

O sacred Trinity, God of love, open our ears to hear your word and to know your voice. Speak to our hearts and strengthen our wills that we may serve you now, and always, in your broken world. Amen.

There is a longstanding joke amongst clergy, that it often falls to the curate or the newly ordained to preach on Trinity Sunday, saving the senior clergy the challenge of wading waist-deep through hundreds of years of complicated, mind-boggling Church teaching and doctrine. And so, as curate and newly ordained, I begin my sermon today — tiptoeing cautiously on the lily pads of our faith.

The Trinity, after all, is the ultimate riddle, the ultimate confusion, the ultimate puzzle — it simply doesn't make sense to the rational mind. And the real trouble with trying to talk about the Trinity is that we quickly fall into heady theological language: three substances, three persons, consubstantial, hpyerstatic union, homo ousia.

Fancy academic words, but what does any of this even mean to you and to me in the middle of a pandemic? Does it really matter that God is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit to the family of a man who brutally murdered by police officers in Minneapolis? What's the point of the Trinity when violence and hate seem to be strangling the world. Is it all a dream, and if so, can we not surely dream something better?

Enter stage right: Jesus and Matthew's Gospel.

SLIDE. Probably my all-time favourite church-nerd word is *Missio Dei*, it is a fancy theological word that translates as “the mission of God,” “God's sending,” “God's plan,” “God's dream.” We have a God who is moving and active and actually doing things right now in the world.

It suggests that God has a dream for the world, a dream of justice and peace and wholeness and mercy for all people; and that the whole ministry of the Church is to live out that dream, to strive to turn that dream into a reality.

Jesus says to the disciples today, “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations.” Bible scholars refer to this section as the Great Commission, Jesus’ sending out of the disciples, his command to continue pushing that dream of God.

This commissioning shouldn’t come entirely as a surprise. Throughout Matthew’s gospel there are hints that the good news is for all peoples: from the visit of gentile magi from the East, to the stories of Jesus healing gentile Roman soldiers and the gentile Canaanite woman, it is clear that God’s dream cannot be limited by national or ethnic boundaries. God’s dream is limitless.

This is one of those hinge points in the Bible, where God’s dream overflows the pages, overflows the black and red letters of text, and spreads out into our hearts and to all the corners of the earth.

I think we need to distinguish between discipleship and dominion. We heard that language in the Genesis passage. God says, “let them have dominion over” creation. A term that implies power, supremacy, superiority, judgment, conquest. These are words that make me uncomfortable, to say the least. Is this how we are supposed to act as Christians? As superior to others? As supremist or conquerers of others?

SLIDE. Certainly, this is not a possibility out of keeping with Church history — and we don’t have to look to far.

Between 1879 and 1996, over 150,000 indigenous children in our country were separated from their homes, deprived of their culture, language, and family, beaten and abused, as part of the Residential School system in the name of the Dominion of Canada and colonial discipleship. Most of these schools were church run.

It's easy to point the finger at the USA or elsewhere right now, but the legacy of this historic violence lives on even here: there is a disproportionate number of indigenous, immigrant, and black men who are in prison, detention centres, who are homeless, or who suffer with addiction and substance abuse. Anyone who has been a part of our Monday night prison ministry in Cowansville will know what I mean.

How this falls short of God's dream. How this falls short of the Gospel. But, what if we see the command to discipleship alongside Jesus' greatest commandment: to love God with all our being, and to love your neighbour as ourself. That also comes from Matthew's gospel.

When I was growing up, my best friend had an old record player in her basement, with a stack of old Beatles Lps. As children of the 1990s we would marvel at this amazing technology. In hindsight I am now someone amazed that our parents ever let us listen to those lyrics, but right after "I am the Walrus," the song we would listen to over and over and over again was John Lenin's 1971 hit, "Imagine." You all know it:

You, you may say I'm a dreamer
But I'm not the only one
I hope someday you will join us
And the world will be as one

Imagine no possessions
I wonder if you can
No need for greed or hunger
A brotherhood of man

Imagine all the people
Sharing all the world

The gospel of blessed St. John Lenin.

Jesus envisions a community of disciples from all nations. I wonder, how have we failed to recognize Jesus in the “other”? I wonder if we need these “others” to help Jesus make better disciples of us? I even wonder if a community of “all nations” leaves space for our Jewish, Muslim, or Hindu brothers and sisters? I wonder how we disfigure God’s dream into God’s nightmare?

Not power, but partnership. Not supremacy, but service to others. Not judgment, but justice. Not conquest, but care, respect and reconciliation. Not dominion, but sacred diversity.

This is why we acknowledge the indigenous territory in our worship: acknowledging traditional territory shows recognition of, and respect for, indigenous peoples. It is a recognition of their presence in our communities in past, present, and future, and is the first-step in a more proactive approach to reconciliation that involves building relationships with, and learning from, our indigenous relations.

It lays the foundations for healing and reconciliation, the foundations for God’s dream. I wonder how we can lay similar foundations in our own homes and lives?

SLIDE. Because, what if God's mission is something to be lived out here and now, in our own homes and communities, and not just something for Tom and Rita-Claire to do in Brazil and other far off places? Because, if that's discipleship then you or I don't really need to do anything. That's someone else's job, in some other place. But, Jesus' charge is for all of us to live out: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations."

It's worth noting that the origins of the word commission — as soon-to-be bishops graduate and classics student Pam can vouch for me — derives from the Latin *committere*, meaning to join together, combine, connect, to unite, or reconcile. God's dream is our dream; the disciples commission is ours.

The commission that Jesus entrusts to his church is broken by racism, hate, or nationalistic ideology. There is no room for God the Father's love in a world where the military is deployed against peaceful protestors, crying out for justice. There is no room for the redemptive reconciliation of God the Son in a world where correctional justice (perhaps we should say correctional injustice) hugely favours white people over those of other racial backgrounds. There is no room for God the Holy Spirit when a man in Minneapolis is suffocated by police brutality, painfully crying out "I can't breathe."

It seems, now more than ever, Jesus' vision of a community of all nations needs to be lifted up in our broken, broken world.

Hate doesn't have the last word...violence doesn't have the last word...Fear
doesn't have have the last word...God's dream has the last word...

You, you may say I'm a dreamer
But I'm not the only one
I hope someday you will join us
And the world will be as one.

Amen.