**Reflection for Trinity Sunday – 7 June 2020**

‘*May the divided tongues of understanding dance on your authentic head.*’

We continue where we ended last week, with dance. The cosmic dance of love that in its most profound and mysterious form is for us Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Earlier in his letter to the Corinthians, Paul quotes the Shema and affirms the one true God known through his word, wisdom, glory and spirit. Giving the one true God three names was not a problem for the first followers of Jesus, because it reflected their experience, but it was for the Greek philosophical world into which it emerged. Its authorities wanted to know *what* this God was, and Paul answered with a *who*. It rocked the powers that be at that moment in time.

Fast forward fifteen hundred years and we have another occasion. The invention of the printing press allowed William Tyndale to challenge both the church and the establishment with his translation of the Bible into English. He was tried on a charge of heresy and executed in 1536 but lives on through his seminal translation. It rocked the ‘powers that be’ at that ‘moment in time’ (and we have Tyndale to thank for both these now universal phrases).

The rocking continues. Live recordings on our phones are now shared and witnessed instantaneously and globally which the powers that be can neither deny nor ignore. The immorality of outright discrimination, cruelty and injustice is now there for all to see, as are the failures of our systems of justice.

We can’t fail to wail and ask what use to us is the cosmic dance of love in all this pain and grief.

Yet it is this very dance we need turn to in our grief, and its steps we can learn and practice even through our pain because, despite the forces of darkness, we believe there is a reason for beauty, compassion and goodness; and that to name their eternal source - to define true love - is to name God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Learning and practising this cosmic dance of love is not easy and is often painful. We are constantly reminded of the steps we have never bothered to learn, or the ones we did once master but have forgotten through lack of practice. We flounder, fall out of step, tread on others’ toes, and even block their way so they struggle to dance.

In static, self-centred lives the world orbits around us and our needs become primary and non-negotiable. We are even capable of turning virtue on its head, when helping others is only a by-product of our need to be needed, or be seen as worthy, which makes us feel good about ourselves.

In contrast, our triune God is characterized by mutual self-giving love, as the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit dynamically orbit around one another always putting the interest and glory of the other first. We are on Holy Ground here and must recognise it. We struggle to describe a mystery, a divine dance and intimacy in loving community and relationship way beyond our knowledge, even though we are created in God’s image.

We may struggle to describe the mystery, but we are capable of recognising in God the very essence of love which makes it the ultimate reality of our lives. We are capable of understanding where and how we flounder around in the divine dance and get all the steps wrong. We know what it feels like to genuinely, willingly surrender to the options and limitations that come from true relationships, and lovingly put another’s interests and glory first above all else.

And we marvel at how wonderful it feels to do something solely for the benefit and glory of another person and find they are lovingly doing the same for us – that’s heaven. That’s the divine dance.

It’s also the dance that allows us to face our wrongdoings and see repentance, penance and justice through the lens of restoration and transformation, not punishment.

We seem to have lost sight of repentance and penance in every day speech, while on the other hand justice is referred to widely but means many different things. Penance is often mistaken for punishment, but it speaks to a much higher purpose of changing lives and restoring broken relationships. It involves accepting responsibility for the repair of what is broken – the toes that have been trodden on, the blocks that we have put before others in their dance.

Facing up to and being responsible for the repair of what we have broken is one of the most healing things a repentant sinner can do, while it is also what makes penance so painful. But our confession and pardon are God’s gifts which restore us and get us back in step with the divine dance.

The oppressed and marginalised in society of course have a completely different view of justice to their oppressors. Yet history and our Holy Scriptures have shown us, time and again, that when the powers that be have a vested interest in maintaining the status quo with outright discrimination and cruelty, it can still be rocked to its foundations by one man’s cry for justice.

The justice I am talking about is not the criminal justice system which is designed to ask: Who did it? What law was broken? How do we punish the offender? Rather, I speak of restorative justice, where God is our guide and instead we ask: What harm was done? What is needed to repair the harm? Who is responsible for repairing it? We are.

We are responsible for creating a world of peace and equality for ourselves and future generations, as Former U.S President Jimmy Carter has powerfully expressed in his statement on 3 June following what he calls the tragic racial injustices and consequent backlash in recent weeks. We do need all governments and authorities to be as good as the people they serve, and we are surely better than this.

We can take courage and encouragement from our past, knowing that the powers that be can be rocked when we stop expecting others to orbit around us and meet our needs first, and only address the vital repairs necessary to heal our broken society second.

Being self-centred causes relationships of every kind to unravel (as they first did in Eden); political, social and personal relationships continually blow up when we want to be the centres of orbit. Our scriptures repeatedly show us how our self-centredness is always our downfall and makes it so difficult for us to lead the fulfilled lives of love and joy God intends for us.

We are therefore truly blessed when, by the grace of God, we recognise this cosmic dance of love and our Lord’s open invitation to join in. When we together follow our Lord’s command to go help others join in and do the same - make disciples of all the nations and baptize them in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

That is when we go and make a difference; learn and persistently practise the steps of divine love; so we can play our full part in the mysterious cosmic dance bringing beauty, compassion and goodness into our broken world.

*The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with us all. Amen*