

Part of Sermon preached by Lyn Jenkins
on
Trinity Sunday, Feast of Title.

O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness. - Ps 29:2

Whenever there is an eclipse of the sun we are always reminded, and emphatically told that we must never under any circumstances look directly at the sun with the naked eye. Those who ignore this advice risk severe damage to their eyes, if not total blindness. The light of the sun is dazzling, far too bright to behold.

God is far more glorious than the sun.

For us, mere mortal beings, we can only get glimpses of his glory in this life.

God is so glorious and so full of splendour that he is beyond description.

When Jesus was transfigured before his close disciples, Peter, James and John were nearly blinded.

And just as direct visual observation of the sun may blind us, so direct contemplation of the Trinity may blind our minds. The Trinity is beyond our grasp.

The Athanasian creed tries to explain the Trinity but, I find it's likely to leave one even more confused!

I read somewhere that apparently in the medieval church, the preaching of sermons was forbidden on Trinity Sunday because of the difficulty of the subject.

I don't know how much truth there is in that, but I do know that whenever I try to explain the Trinity I end up tying myself in knots. So, that's the end of my sermon on the Trinity . However, it is not the end of my sermon.

For one of the words that come to mind on this day is 'holy'.

Holy -holy is a word we use to refer to God.

Although the root meaning is 'set apart', we think of anything termed holy as being set apart for God.

Altar - holy table - not just an ordinary table, although with the linen removed it doesn't look anything special. But, the altar is a table set apart for the Bread and Wine of the Eucharist. Again, ordinary bread and wine, but made holy at the consecration so the Bread and the Wine become in a spiritual way, different.

We often refer to the Bible as the Holy Bible, or Holy Books.

The angels in heaven sing: ' Holy, Holy, Holy' - Sanctus, Sanctus, Sanctus - to use the Latin name. From Sanctus we get sanctify, saint.

A saint is a holy person - not necessarily a good person. Some of the saints originally led far from perfect lives. But saints are those who devote their lives to God, set their lives apart for God - and so are known as 'holy people'.

Each one of us, who has decided to follow Jesus for the rest of our lives and have dedicated our lives to God can also be called 'holy'.

And the Psalmist tells us to '*worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness*' .

In the Psalter we use at Evensong are the words '*worship the Lord in the raiment of holiness*' .

Now, although the words *beauty of holiness* mean a lot more to me, I don't find them easy to explain. *Raiment of holiness* does help.

Raiment is a garment and we must be clothed with holiness.

We can only come before the Lord just as we are - with all our faults and failings, but when we come acknowledging our sins and focussing our minds and our very beings on the holiness of God, I believe some of that holiness rubs off on us.

God is holy and the closer we get to God, the more holy we become.

Each moment we spend in stillness before the Lord, in silent adoration, fills us with another drop of his holiness.

In the story of Moses and the Burning Bush as Moses approached the bush, God said, '*Come no closer! Remove the sandals from your feet, for the place in which you are standing is holy ground*'.

Holy ground -- holy ground is to be treated with respect.

God created the whole world surely then, the whole world is holy.

But we have desecrated much of the world - we have not, and do not, treat the world with respect. That's another sermon.

But let us not ban God from our daily lives.

Let us, at least, remember his holiness and give him the reverence and respect which is his due. We can become so involved with the everyday things of life that God can so easily be ignored. That's one reason why it is so important to visit holy places, to come regularly to church, to spend time alone with God.

The Presence of God is everywhere, but it is far easier to be aware of that Presence in some holy place.

And when we really become aware of the Presence, we will instinctively *worship the Lord In the beauty of holiness*.

One of the books I tend to reread every few years is 'The Wind in the Willows'. I first read it when I was at school. But one chapter did not mean much to me then. Now I think it is really special - it is the one when Ratty and Mole encounter the god Pan.

It is an awesome, wonderful feeling when God's Presence seems very close.

We can then truly say we are clothed *with the beauty of holiness*.

I have no intention of joining the Orthodox Church, but amongst other things I like the emphasis on holiness. Even though the Liturgy can be lengthy and to the uninitiated not always very comprehensible, nevertheless, there is an awareness of the holiness of God. It is like being in another world - or rather one is transported out of the ordinariness of this world and given a glimpse of heaven. There is a haunting beauty in the singing, and the rich colourful vestments contribute to the splendour.

What a difference from the idea of heaven I read about in a recent copy of the Church Times. Apparently there is a film called 'A Matter of Life and Death'. In this film, heaven is portrayed in black and white. There is no colour. I can't possibly imagine a colourless heaven. For me heaven is the most beautiful, dazzling place imaginable. The picture we have in Rev 4 tells about precious stones, golden crowns and flashes of lightning. And one day, when our turn comes to dwell in that holy place, we will no longer need to shield our eyes from the dazzling rays of God; we will no longer be told not to get too close; but instead we will see and experience the Lord in all his glory and we will be able to join the heavenly creatures worshipping the one who lives for ever, singing *Holy, holy, holy*, and in all its fullness truly worshipping the Lord in the beauty of holiness.

*O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness
Bow down before him his glory proclaim.*