

**Trinity Sunday 2021**  
**Pastor Ann Hultquist**  
**Isaiah 6:1-8/Romans 8:12-17/John 3:11-17**

I love You, Lord  
For Your mercy never fails  
All my days, I've been held in Your hands  
From the moment that I wake up  
Until I lay my head  
Oh, I will sing of the goodness of God

“The Goodness of God” is a song I first heard as we started our way out of the pandemic; not in our hymnal; it’s a “praise” song (not everyone’s preference); but believe it or not, it is very Lutheran in its message: “I will sing of the goodness of God.” I wonder if this could be our song, your song, as we finally gather together again for worship in this place on this Trinity Sunday. “Not today,” you might be saying; or “too soon”; or “maybe...”

At our core, we Lutherans are people firmly grounded in two words: “*And yet...*” Here’s what that sounds like: The world seems to be falling apart; *and yet* Jesus promised to never leave us or forsake us. Hate and division threaten peace and hope; *and yet* God’s arms embrace all, and the Spirit is always moving to accomplish justice. This sorrow, this anxiety, this grief has been crushing *and yet* Christ’s love surrounds us in our darkness. Death is inescapable *and yet* the resurrection has the final word.

Without that “and yet,” what we have experienced this past year collectively and individually; what we experience in our lives at any time might lead us straight to despair and hopelessness. Or we might just cling tightly to the mistaken adage “what doesn’t kill you makes you stronger,” and believe that somehow it’s all based on us, our strength, our willpower. Neither is helpful or life-giving in the end, but we’ve all likely been there, perhaps *are there* still.

This morning’s celebration and the scriptures that we hear today invite us into a different perspective: the fullness of that “and yet,” and the fullness of God.

“Holy, holy, holy,” Isaiah hears in his vision of God calling in the Temple. “Holy, holy, holy,” we sing today as well--all about the awesomeness of God, isn’t it? The mystery that is beyond our grasp and beyond our description.

For some people, as we have become more and more scientific, more knowledgeable about the universe, God has become less and less likely, or maybe less needed. But really? I mean, have you seen the pictures from Hubble, the satellite pictures of our own planet, the intricate microscopic images of our own cells? They are breathtaking, aren’t they? All this can lead us *toward* God, the Creator who made all things and is in all things--where do you see/experience this awesome One whom Isaiah encountered--the God who is mystery *and yet* calls each one of us by name just as Isaiah was called.

But that’s not quite enough for this Sunday, not enough of who God is, who God longs to be with us, God’s people. In Jesus of Nazareth, God’s love entered fully into our human life, in flesh and blood in a body like ours. Jesus is God in motion toward us, refusing to just stay “awesome” and out there. “Emmanuel,” Luke’s Gospel calls Jesus--God With Us. “Teacher,” says Nicodemus, who comes to Jesus at night, confused about what Jesus is doing and how he can be a part of it.

Jesus’ answer is so wonderful and also so concrete that we have held onto it for thousands of years: “God so loved the world that God sent his Son; not to condemn the world, but to save and heal it.” On the cross Jesus’ arms are stretched out to all with love that cannot be stopped by hatred or violence; the fullness of that love can’t be stopped even by death, can it? And it can’t be stopped by our turning away from it, again and again. We are sure there must be a limit to God’s love in Christ, *and yet* there is not. Do you remember the first time you heard that good news? Are you hearing it clearly for yourself again today?

We see that tender love enacted today as Bonnie is baptized in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The fullness of God again reaches out--this little one doesn’t somehow “get” God--God gets her, just as God reached out and claimed all of us in those waters. We’ll pray for the Spirit’s presence with her: (wisdom, understanding, counsel, might, knowledge, joy in God’s presence) and maybe we could add the fruits of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity,

faithfulness and self-control. Such huge gifts for such a little person--but she will grow into them little by little, just as we all do as followers of Jesus, children of God.

How we struggle to remember, struggle to trust that the Holy Spirit is alive and active in each of us as promised. *And yet*, all our life, from beginning to end, the Spirit calls us, gathers us, sends us to embody God's love in our living.

Father, Son, and Holy Spirit--Creator, Redeemer, Sanctifier--the fullness of who God is--still there is mystery, isn't there? *And yet*, we know that God is always for us; always reaching out to us in love, running to meet us, and calling us "beloved."

Nothing, Saint Paul says in Romans 8, **nothing**--neither life or death, the present or the future, nothing in all creation (we might add the last 15 months)--can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus. Nothing. Nothing. Hold on to that. *We will sing of the goodness of God.*