

“All that belongs to the Father is mine”

Living on a rock, living in a hard place, living in stones. Many Christians are faced with doing just that. God's people have always lived in hard places.

In the book of Daniel, three young Hebrew captives had big decisions to make in their life, whether to bow the knee to the Babylonian King, and worship his gold image, or be thrown into the fiery furnace and denounce their God. Their response was unhesitating, *“Our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace...”* Daniel 3 v17-18

Through the centuries some of God's servants have faced agonising decisions but have stood firm on the side of God. Men like the Apostle John, literally exiled onto the rock of Patmos. But it was there that he was to draw closer to God.

Why? Because they believed that the God of Israel, the One true God, would deliver them and was with them in their hard place.

Today is Trinity Sunday, that special day in our Church's calendar which speaks of unity in the Godhead. The Christian doctrine of the Trinity defines God as being one God existing in three coequal, coeternal, divine persons: God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit, three distinct persons sharing the same substance. The First Council of Nicaea, in the 4th Century, presided over by the emperor Constantine, was convened to resolve the controversy of the Trinity.

Their answer, three distinct persons but one in nature. Jesus is one of the three of the Trinity, the Son but One with the Father and the Spirit. This doctrine has been with us since then.

Today on Trinity Sunday, we celebrate the uniqueness of God. According to Jewish belief, they were taught and are taught the *Shema*, a Hebrew text consisting of three passages from (Deuteronomy 6:4, 11:13–21; and Numbers 15:37–41) and beginning ‘Hear O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord’. It forms an important part of Jewish evening and morning prayers and is used as a Jewish confession of faith.

Christianity has its roots in Judaism and so this great prayer is a foundational block of our faith also. The Lord our God is One Lord.

Out of sheer love, at the beginning of the Universe, God decided to create this incredible planet and there was a conversation where God said...*It is good!*

That is how our story on this planet begins. It begins in God's love and grace and it ends there to. God lives in community. God has the fellowship of Father, Son and Holy Spirit and God created the world to share this community with his creatures.

The Son was to play an important role in Creation. He is the Word and Wisdom of God. He was there at the beginning. But He enters our time and space. This is the mystery of God.

A mystery summed up by Graham Kendrick in his hymn...*"Come see his hands and his feet, the scars that speak of sacrifice, hands that flung stars into space, to cruel nails surrendered. This is our God the Servant King, he calls us now to follow Him, to bring our lives as a daily offering of worship to the servant King."*

Jesus is the image of God

Today in our Gospel reading, we hear Jesus making the amazing claim, that **"all that belongs to the Father is his"**,

The excellent theologian and philosopher, **C. S. Lewis** wrote,

"You must make your choice: either this man was, and is, the Son of God, or else a madman or something worse. You can shut him up for a fool, you can spit at him and kill him as a demon; or you can fall at his feet and call him Lord and God. But let us not come with any patronising nonsense about his being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to."

~ C. S. LEWIS

On this day of the year we consider this claim of Jesus. *"All that belongs to the Father is mine."*

Your God is Too Small Is a classic book written by the renowned theologian **JB Phillips** which challenges our small understanding of God.

He writes, "The trouble with many of us today, is that we have not found a God big enough for our modern needs. In varying degrees we suffer from a limited idea of God. Phillips exposes such inadequate conceptions of God as

"Resident Policeman, " "Grand Old Man, " "Meek-and-Mild, " and "Managing Director, " and in his book he explores ways in which we can find a truly meaningful and constructive God for ourselves.

One thing for sure the Bible has a large concept of God. A God who creates, a God who is all loving, all knowing and all wise.

Jesus understood this and he has called us to call this God, Our Father in Heaven. But more than that he claims that all that belongs to the Father is His.

What an amazing truth for us to grasp, that this Jesus whom we follow, is One with God.

The early Church developed this theme and in Colossians 1v15, We have this amazing, mind-blowing statement from the Apostle Paul, "Christ is the image of the invisible God, the first born of all creation."

A young boy traveling by aeroplane to visit his grandparents sat beside a man who happened to be a seminary professor. The boy was reading a Sunday school take-home paper when the professor thought he would have some fun with the lad. Young man, said the professor, *"If you can tell me something God can do, I'll give you a big, shiny apple."* The boy thought for a moment and then replied, *"Mister, if you can tell me something God can't do, I'll give you a whole barrel of apples!"*

The answer to this simple yet profound question of how big is God is this: God is as big as we will let Him be in our lives.

God can only be as big as you allow Him to be in your life. If God seems too small to meet your needs or to solve your problems, it's not God's fault because God is big and powerful.

God is all that the Bible says that He is. He is as powerful and as big as the Word proclaims that He is. There is no limit to His power and ability.

We make Him small or big by whether we believe what the Word has to say about Him or whether we don't really believe it.

Job, the innocent sufferer declared: *"I know that You can do everything, and that no purpose of Yours can be withheld from You"* (Job 42:2). Why? Because he experienced in his life, through his illness and through everything he lost, the greatness of God. This One thing kept him going and took him through the dark night of his soul.

The Living Bible puts it this way: *"I know that you can do anything and that no one can stop you."*

Jesus declared in Matthew 19:26 - *"With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible."*

It is our faith or our lack of faith in God's word that will determine how big God is in our lives

It is when we know the truth from God's word and act upon it that God will be able to show Himself strong in our lives.

As we read the Word and know what it says, it then helps us to realise the bigness of God and as a result He is able to do great things for us.

God will become to us as big as the truth we have learned about Him.

But if we do not read God's Word to learn the truth about Him then our faith will be small and in our eyes God will not be big enough to take care of all our problems.

One of my favourite stories of the Bible is the encounter between the shepherd boy David and the giant Goliath. All odds were stacked in Goliath's favour – humanly speaking of course! But he didn't take into account the faith that David had in Israel's One God. David came to the giant and said, *"You are coming to fight against me with a sword, a spear and a javelin. But I'm coming against you in the name of the Lord who rules over all. He is the God of the armies of Israel. He's the one you have dared to fight against. This day the Lord will give me the victory over you."*

Perhaps today you are going through a great challenge in your life?

You wonder, how will I cope? Where will I find strength from to fight this problem?

The answer is right here, that our understanding of who God is will help us in the battle.

If our God is so small, then the battle is already lost, but if your understanding of God is big, if it's bigger than yourself, then you have a great chance of winning the battle.

In order to develop our faith we must read and apply God's Word to our lives.

When we do, we will begin to see His greatness.

There is a wonderful little children's song that goes like this...

My God is so big, so strong and so mighty,

There's nothing my God cannot do

My God is so big, so strong and so mighty,

There's nothing my God cannot do

The mountains are His, the rivers are His

The stars are His handiwork too

My God is so big, so strong and so mighty

There's nothing my God cannot do, hey, hey

My God is so great, so strong and so mighty

There's nothing my God cannot do

My God is so great, so strong and so mighty

There's nothing my God cannot do

Remember, God will only be as big in your life as you allow Him to be.

When we see God through the lens of the Trinity, he becomes a big God.

When we look to this great God, then like the Livingstone Daisy, our eyes are opened and our heads are drawn away from darkness and to the eternal light and we receive the energy and the strength that comes from the Son of God.

Amen.