

Sermon for Sunday 31 May 2026 (Trinity Sunday)

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Isaiah 40.12-17,27-31; Psalm 8; 2 Corinthians 13.11-13; Matthew 28.16-20

In the name of God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen. Please do be seated.

We held a special PCC meeting on Wednesday evening at which we considered some ideas about what we might do next as a church in our journey together, and our discussions accorded, I think, with the command that Jesus gives to his disciples at the end of today's Gospel reading: to baptise and to teach, building up the kingdom of God and making Christ known.

Our first readings this morning on Trinity Sunday begin with expressions of praise and awe and wonder and worship. We can imagine the prophet Isaiah contemplating 'Who is God?', and the psalmist too reflecting on the awesome wonder of God. And both of them write poetically, as we've read this morning and sung this morning, worshipping God because of his mighty power, the glory of creation, his awesomeness beyond our ability to find words to express. So whatever we do as a church, our life together begins with worship and praise and awe and wonder before our Father God.

The Gospel scene begins today on a mountaintop. Many things happen on mountaintops in the Bible because mountaintops serve as a place of encounter between God and whichever biblical hero he's invited to meet him there. And the hero doesn't stay on the mountaintop, but he's sent down into the world to minister in the name of God. So if you think about all the mountaintop experiences that you can think of in the Bible; I can remember Moses meeting God on the mountaintop, and there he receives the Ten Commandments, which he takes down into the world as God's good guidance for holy living. The prophet Elijah was taken up to a mountaintop to meet with God and experienced God there, not in a mighty wind or an earthquake or a fire. But God, he found, was present in the stillness and the peace and the sheer silence. And encountering God in the silence enabled the prophet Elijah to find the peace he needed to leave the mountaintop and to serve God in the world.

Similarly, Jesus was tempted by the devil on the mountaintop. He preached the Sermon on the Mount, which obviously was on a mountaintop. He prayed on the Mount of Olives, and he ascended into heaven from a mountaintop. So in each case, the mountain is the place of encounter from which the mission of God pours out to fill the world.

So I thought too of the storey of Noah's Ark. Noah's Ark, you remember, comes to rest on the top of Mount Ararat. And when the floods have subsided, all the animals and the birds that were inside the ark are released. And we can picture their colour and their noise and their vibrancy as flocks and herds rush down the mountain to fill the world with song and roars and moos of every kind.

Just so, the mission of the disciples. Go therefore, says Jesus, and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Many voices to be released in one language of praise.

So thinking about these things in our PCC meeting, it occurred to me that our church is kind of on a mountaintop on the edge of our village, certainly a hilltop. It overlooks the village, and people say that the church kind of broods over the community. From the top of the tower, you can look out at creation all spread around and see the glorious wonder of the mighty creation of our Father God spread out below. And our task as PCC members and as the church family is not to make people come to church as an end in itself. Our task is to invite people to come here as a place of encounter, to worship, to pray, for teaching, in order that we can be sent out to fill the world with joy and life, in Jesus' name.

And we note, strangely, in the Gospel that some disciples doubted. It's not clear what they doubted or why. They might have doubted who Jesus was. They might have doubted their own abilities to serve Jesus. And maybe that's understandable. I wonder if we sometimes too doubt our own faith, doubt our own abilities. Working out who Jesus is, is one of the important things, necessary progress of our own faith. We discover God in our doubts and wrestlings rather than our certainties.

And in answer to the question of doubt, 'Who is Jesus?' Matthew in his Gospel deliberately provides us with an answer. In all the previous Old Testament mountaintop experiences in the Bible, the key human figure meets God on the mountaintop. But in this Gospel passage that we've just read this morning, the disciples meet Jesus on the mountaintop. Matthew, in his story of mountaintops, particularly this last one, deliberately places Jesus in the position usually occupied by God.

So the message is clear: Jesus is God. And most of the disciples, we're told, recognise this truth and worship him. Only God is worthy of worship. The disciples were all God-fearing Jews, but here we see that most of them at least are convinced by what they've seen in the life and the death and the resurrection of Jesus to convince them that Jesus is God. And this truth we recognise too as we worship in the name of Jesus on Trinity Sunday.

So worship and prayer are a necessary condition of being sent out, and doubts and questions fill our minds. And through doubt, faith grows. And we come here to worship, to acknowledge who Jesus is, to acknowledge who we are, and to wrestle with our doubts, maybe.

And one of the things we discussed at our PCC meeting is how our worship might be enhanced and developed in order to help us to see the awesome wonder of God and to see Jesus and to worship him more deeply. And so we thought together that maybe the third Sunday of the month might be an opportunity to do something different, to be brave and to try some new ideas. And we also thought that not on a Sunday morning, we could try things perhaps after school, other days of the week, to engage with younger families, parents with children. And we recognise too the importance of a regular programme of study groups through the year to help us to explore and understand our faith, to ask questions, to wrestle with our doubts and deepen our faith. So all of those things require some prayer, and I invite you to offer your prayers for those things and for the future of the church as we work up some practical ideas to help us to worship and to explore our doubts and to deepen our faith.

And then in the Gospel passage, Jesus says all authority in heaven and earth has been given to him. At the beginning of the Gospel, we read that the devil tries to tempt Jesus into believing that the devil has the power and authority on earth, and the devil invites Jesus to come up on a mountaintop and see all creation spread out below and to worship him. By the end of the Gospel, we discover that the devil is a fraud. It's Jesus who has the authority. Jesus, by his ministry of love, by his death, by his resurrection, has defeated the powers of evil and shown that the path of life isn't the selfish pursuit of power as the devil would have it. Instead, it is the giving of self in love and service. And Jesus therefore is already ruling in this world.

How, might we ask, is Jesus already ruling in this troubled world? Well, it is through the commission he gives to his disciples in every generation to go out into the world as his agents to baptise and teach. That is how Jesus exercises his rule in each generation.

So another important thing about the future of the church is how we engage with our community. There was, as you know, a horrible house fire in Lavenham a few days ago. Two houses completely destroyed, people made homeless. And in response, there has been within the community a remarkable overflowing generosity of people wanting to help. Margaret and I went down a few days ago to meet a member of the family and to see what we could do. The Salvation Army, the British Legion, shops, businesses, neighbours have all been expressing kindness of all sorts to love and kindness, a willingness to help.

And it reminds us that the work of the Holy Spirit is not confined to or limited by the walls of the church, but can move many hearts and build community. And here is the authority of Jesus at

work in the world through many hands, renewing the face of the earth, defeating the powers of evil and loneliness and failure and loss. And the church in the world can encourage those things, but as I say, the Holy Spirit is not confined to the church.

But on this Trinity Sunday, it's important to note that God does invite us to participate in the outreach and the mission of God in the world. And we pray for that every time we pray the Lord's Prayer: Thy kingdom come on earth as it is in heaven. And if we pray that prayer together regularly, we shouldn't be too surprised if the Holy Spirit moves our hearts and invites us to accept the responsibility and the invitation to make that prayer come true. How will the kingdom be built? It will be built by the disciples, by us, in the name of Jesus, by the power of the Holy Spirit, according to the Father's loving purposes, serving as Christians in our world in the ways that he calls us to do so.

One of the tasks that Jesus gives to his disciples is to baptise people in his name. To be baptised as Christians means that we are given Jesus's name. When we work with children in church, we all of us wear a name badge or a lanyard with our names on, but the lanyard gives us permission, it gives us authority, it gives us assurance that what we're doing with the young people isn't in our name and strength alone, but it is in the strength and with the authority of the church. So we wear a name badge to give that confidence in what we're doing.

And baptism is like having that name badge. We are baptised into Jesus and we are thereby given his name as ours, his permission, his authority, the responsibility to teach and to serve in the world as his disciples. And he gives us the Holy Spirit to equip us. With the words and the actions and the right motives to do so.

So one of the simplest ideas that we came up with at our PCC meeting was a new notice board. Doesn't sound too radical, does it? But a new notice board facing the Cock Horse that would be invitational, welcoming, and informative, expressing our desire to invite people to come here to join us to worship and to discover a sense of awe and wonder before our Father God. A simple tool in helping us to be invitational. And being invitational, the work is never over; it carries on in every generation. But it's God's work that we're asked to do, and we do it with and we do it for Jesus, who promised, 'Remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age,' and who poured out his Holy Spirit upon his disciples in every age to enable them to do the work of building the kingdom.

So I invite you therefore to pray about the future of our church, to pray for the PCC and its ideas, to bless them that they might be fruitful, and to give thanks that he has given us his Spirit such that we have a desire to serve him. And we pray, Lord, that you would prosper the work of our hands for your name's sake. Amen.