

Trinity Sunday—Year B
Acts 10:44-48
Psalm 98
I John 5:1-6
John 15:9-17

When I last preached **three weeks ago**, in was in the wake of the **mass shooting in our community**. This week, **another one**, this time across the country in a **San Jose, CA public transit authority rail yard**—10 dead including the suspect who also worked there. This was **San Jose’s second mass shooting in the last two years**, and **in between Boone and San Jose’s tragedy** was the **mass shooting on May 9th in Colorado Springs** at a birthday party with 7 dead including the suspect. The **Gun Violence Archives**, which “**defines a mass shooting as one in which 4 or more people are injured or killed, not including the perpetrator,**” has **catalogued 232 mass shootings since the start of this year**—that averages more than 1 a day. That’s a staggering statistic, **more death and trauma and grief than our heart can hold**.

And **this week marked the one-year anniversary of the murder of George Floyd**. Many have reflected upon this **year of racial reckoning**. *It some ways*, there is so **much reason to hope**. So many people have worked to **learn and understand the impacts of systemic racism, listening to and believing the experience of black, brown, and indigenous people**, and more recently, **Asian Americans**. Communities have **gotten creative** and are **trying all kinds of things to repair what is broken**. *In other ways*, there is **cause for despair** because acts of hate are still being visited upon people solely because of the **color of their skin or their ethnic background**, and **black and brown people are still dying at the hands of systems meant to protect life, not end it**.

Earlier **this week**, video was released of a **2019 encounter between Louisiana state troopers and Ronald Greene**, a 49-year old African-American man, and a barber by trade. It **started with an unspecified traffic violation, escalated into a high-speed chase, and ended with Greene’s death**. The **troopers’ initial account said Greene “died on impact” after crashing into a tree**. The **ER doctor said that didn’t add up given his bruising and that there two stun gun prongs still in his back**. The **body-camera footage was suppressed for two years until it was released to the Associated Press this week**, and *that footage* told a story of **utter brutality and dehumanization**. Painfully, as the troopers come to his window, **Greene is heard to say with hands raised, “OK, OK. I’m sorry” and then “I’m your brother! I’m scared! I’m scared!”** as he is shocked repeatedly. [NPR, May 20, 2021, 9:38 AM]. **“I’m your brother, and I’m scared,” and his brothers could not hear his human cry and brutalized him. It’s more death and trauma and grief than our heart can hold.**

And, it’s **Memorial Day tomorrow**; a day when we **remember the sacrifice of those who have given their lives in the service of our country**; a day when we **count the cost of war, not just in the dead, but also in the living**. We **honor those who died**, and we **remember how the horror of war ripples out through families and communities**. We **pull out from the remembrance of our dead to ALL those who die in war the world over, to communities devastated, to the old and the young and the innocents who bear the brunt of conflict. It’s more death, more trauma, more grief than the heart can hold.**

AND, as I worked on this sermon Friday, I **looked out over the valley toward Grandfather Mountain**. **Everything is all greened out**, and the **mountains so rugged have softened their face to the world**. The **birdsong is joyous in the mornings, and loud**. The **wildflowers on the mountainside are stunning**

in their purples and whites, and the rhododendron are showing all their glory in blooms—it's been unbelievably gorgeous this year! *It's more beauty, more peace, more delight than the heart can hold.*

Amidst all that is so hard in this world right now, there is also so much that fills us with wonder and gratitude. The unexpected kindness of another. The connection that is meaningful. That incredible feeling that wells up when you get your hands in the dirt, *or on a golf club, or on a grandchild.* The milestone reached, the new life granted, the hope that is *not* extinguished. That tenacious, intangible, courage that keeps rising—*it's more life than the heart can hold.*

And ALL of these things, ALL of these things, the hard, the deadly, the traumatic, the grief-causing, the beautiful, the peaceful, the delightful, the joyous, the awe-inspiring, the drop-you-to-your-knees-gratitude-inducing, the tenaciously-courageous—ALL of these things, and ALL the people these things involve, *they are connected, to each other and to us.* If we believe otherwise, then we have failed to understand the *trinity* which we celebrate this day.

The trinity is not a doctrine; it's a lived reality. God is *not* some static, distant, uninvolved, uninterested thing. John 3 reminds that “God so loved the world that he gave his only Son” and that “God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.”

God's desire for the world is WHOLENESS, and God sent Jesus to show us how to weave that WHOLENESS through EVERY aspect of life and reconnect EVERYTHING and EVERYONE to the WHOLE.

The trinity reminds us that God, *by nature*, is RELATIONAL. God is the flow of love that can honor and appreciate the dignity of that which is PARTICULAR *while at the same time* celebrate what is birthed through the power of CONNECTION. The trinity reminds us that love is *always* flowing, like buckets on the waterwheel, fully *receiving* that love AND fully *pouring* that love back out *generating the power* that makes life go.

The flow of love is *always* flowing, *but we are not without power and choice here.* God invites us *always* into this dance, and we can *step into* the flow, receiving AND extending that love, OR we can *block* the flow; stop it dead in its tracks. That's precisely how Richard Rohr defines sin—*stopping the flow of love*—and he is quite clear, *nothing new can be created in that moment.*

When events in the world, or in our lives, are so hard on our hearts, it is tempting to stop the flow because we just don't think our hearts can bear any more, but stopping the flow in *one* place tends to stop the flow in *other* places, and pretty soon, you realize your heart is dry and brittle. *You realize that you've hardened your heart to survive what is hard on your heart.* No, the flow of love makes the heart tender AND the tender heart makes it easier for the love to flow.

It's work to stay tender, hard work, *vulnerable* work, *but we never do this work alone.*

Romans reminds us today that “we have not received a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but we have received a spirit of adoption. When we cry ‘Abba! Father!’ it is that very Spirit bearing witness with *our* spirit that we are children of God, and heirs, joint heirs with Christ—if, in fact, we suffer with him so that we may also be glorified with him.”

The Spirit is always “interceding, praying within us in sighs too deep for words.” *We are joined to Christ for eternity*, and that means that when we stretch out *our* arms and touch suffering, *he is stretching out his arms with us, touching, holding, loving, redeeming, transforming, embracing the dying, raising up new life*. The dance that Jesus does—dying AND rising, letting go and surrendering AND birthing anew—this is *our* dance too, to dance in our lives AND in the life of the world.

The trinity would also remind us this day that we can’t just keep the world at arms-length by *staying in our heads*. It’s tempting, and goodness knows, as a head-type, I know this territory well. But just as the triune God is made to dance in relationship, so too is our head AND our heart AND our body. It is not enough to learn AND keep one’s heart hard. And it is not enough to keep one’s heart tender AND not allow our learning and our tender heart to move into our feet and hands and eyes and mouths. How do we deploy our bodies, *as well as our minds and our hearts*, to join Christ in weaving this world into wholeness?

How do these stories of gun violence and racism and war *move us into action*? How do we move with our minds and our hearts, our hands and our feet and our sight and our voices to *dismantle the systems that are “hurting and destroying the creatures of God”* in the words of our baptismal renunciation? What concrete steps are we taking *as we align ourselves* with the flow of love flowing from the eternal heart of God *to keep that love flowing* in places bereft of such concrete, tangible love?

How do we drink in joy and beauty and peace and gratitude and wonder, *knowing that this too* is part of how we weave wholeness throughout the world, *knowing that this too* is what reconnects us to the whole? When we have drunk fully of these delights, *how do these shape* our minds and hearts, our hands and feet, our capacity to see and the words we speak, as we *pour out* into the world that which we have received?

God who is trinity AND the trinitarian life—these aren’t just esoteric, abstract, useless ideas, *but these are the blueprint for living life in the flow of love* and *knowing in the depth of our being* that THAT love longs to flow everywhere until ALL know themselves to be included in the dance.

So, whether your heart cannot fathom more death and trauma and grief OR cannot conceive of holding more joy, know your heart both rests AND dances in the heart of God where love is always flowing. As we step into THAT flow, we can’t help but be carried into the world weaving the wholeness that is God’s deepest desire *and* delight. Amen.

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May 30, 2021