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Text: John 16:12-15

May 30, 2010
The Holy Trinity

LOVE LIKE GOD

As I was preparing for this weekend's worship, I kept asking myself, "who is God?" After all, the name of this day is The Holy Trinity and this is suppose to be a day when we think about who God is.

While pondering this question, my mind jumped to the news of the day. As I thought about the news, I realized that many of the stories we hear about in the news are stories about God. We hear stories about Iraq. Terrorists. Israel. Gays in the military. Immigration. The oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico. Each of these stories is about God.

Much of what is happening in the world can be traced back to different ways people understand God. In Iraq you have Shiites and Sunnis. With Israel you have Jews and Muslims. In this country you have Christians and secularists. Even among Christians there are vast differences. People have very different ideas about God. Different ideas about God create different ways of looking at the world. And different ways of looking at the world often leads to hostility and conflict. So obviously, the way we think about God makes a big difference - a huge difference!

So where do these different ideas about God come from?

I am reminded of a story. Once a young soldier was traveling through the country when he stopped to rest in a small village. As he walked around he spotted a wood fence. On the wood fence were nearly forty small chalk circles and right in the center of each circle was a bullet hole.

What amazing accuracy, the soldier thought as he examined the fence. There is not a single shot that did not hit the bulls eye. The soldier set out to find the one who possessed such great skill. He was told that the sharpshooter was a small boy.

"Who taught you to shoot so well?" the soldier asked. "I taught myself," the young lad replied. Not yet satisfied the soldier pressed the young boy. "To what do you contribute your great skill?" he asked. "Actually," the young lad began, "it is not very difficult. First I shoot at the wall, and then I take a piece of chalk and draw circles around the holes."

When it comes to God, many people do that. They draw circles around their ideas and claim they hit the bulls eye. But that is not being a good marksman.

There is another way. Jesus talks about it in today's Gospel reading. He says, "when the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth." The Holy Spirit will guide your aim so you can hit the target. You can know who God really is.

The Holy Spirit speaks to us through the Scriptures. What the Scriptures proclaim is that God is love! And it seems to me, that if we could grasp this truth, it just might make a difference in the kind of stories we hear in the news.

To illustrate, let me turn to a book called *The Shack*. The book is about a man named Mack whose youngest daughter was kidnaped and murdered. He was devastated and couldn't make sense of the tragedy. Most of all, he was angry with God. In the book he has a chance to talk with God and he learns to know who God really is.

At one point in the book the conversation turns to the Biblical teaching about the Trinity and Mack asks, "But what difference does it make that there are three of you, and you are all one God?" God replied, "We are not three gods, and we are not talking about one god with three attitudes, like a man who is a husband, father, and worker. I am one God and I am three persons, and each of the three is fully and entirely the one." This answer completely baffled Mack.

God continued, "What's important is this: if I were simply One God and only One Person, then you would find yourself in this Creation without something wonderful, without something essential." "And we would be without . . . ?" asked Mack.

"Love and relationship," answered God. "All love and relationship is possible for you only because it already exists within Me, within God myself." (Page 101)

What a significant insight! God is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. There is a perfect relationship among Father, Son and Holy Spirit. When the Bible says that "God is love," the Bible is saying that God exists in love. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit relate together in perfect love. The essence of God is love.

Now then, the Bible also teaches us that we are created in the image of God. That is, we are created to live in love, just as God - the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit - lives in love. That's why the greatest commandment is to "love the Lord your God." And a second is like it, "you shall love your neighbor as yourself." We are to be people who love, just like God is love.

Turn on the news, though, and it is obvious how difficult it is for people to love. But remember, God is love and God's love pours out to us - to all people. In fact, God loves us so much, that God became human and suffered and died for us in order to change us. Last week was Pentecost and we celebrated the gift of the Holy Spirit. God has given us a new Spirit. It is the Spirit of Jesus, the Spirit of love. The Holy Spirit lives in us and empowers us to love.

The intensity of conflict around the world testifies that ideas people have about God really do matter. What difference do you think it would make if everyone began to understand that God is love? What difference do you think it would make in your life?