

Sermon on 12 June 2022 on Romans 11:33-36 – Trinity

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Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God!

How unsearchable his judgments,

and his paths beyond tracing out!

‘Who has known the mind of the Lord?

Or who has been his counsellor?’

‘Who has ever given to God,

that God should repay them?’

For from him and through him and for him are all things.

To him be the glory for ever! Amen.

Grace be with you and peace from Him

who was and who is and who is to be! Amen.

I.

There is a difference between "a riddle or a puzzle" and "a mystery".

And perhaps therein lies one of the greatest misunderstandings in the world, and certainly one of the greatest errors in the history of faith.

For there is a difference,

whether we look at the world like a riddle or puzzle

or like a mystery.

A riddle or puzzle has a solution.

You only have to think long enough,

and you'll figure out the solution.

It's like a mathematical equation that works out in the end.

Or like a Sudoku that is filled in at the end without contradictions.

Or something else where the task is: Figure it out!

You need the right approach
and stamina
and maybe some thinking
and sometimes a little luck -
and at the end there is THE SOLUTION -
because usually there is only one.
That's the way it is with a riddle or puzzle.
If you know the solution,
then it is no longer a riddle or puzzle.
It becomes uninteresting and boring and unimportant.

II.

A mystery is something else.
You cannot solve a mystery like a mathematical equation.
You can delve into the mystery.
You can think about it.
You can spend your whole life on it.
But you will never solve it.
On the contrary.
the longer you dwell on it
and the deeper you get into the mystery,
the less you solve it.
On the contrary.
The mystery becomes bigger and bigger,
the more you know about it.
Love is such a mystery.
And life with all its depths and profundities.

And, of course, the one of whom the Bible says:

He is THE love,

He is THE life.

God.

God is a mystery.

Incomprehensible and infinite.

Even if you spend your whole life trying to find Him,

the mystery only grows.

III.

Paul knows something about this.

He knows what it is like to seek and know God.

That was his life -

as a scribe and as a missionary.

He has sought God.

He has shared something of it,

in the congregations which he founded

and in the letters that he wrote

and of which we know only a part,

starting with the First letter to the Thessalonians

to the Epistle to the Romans.

This is the most recent letter of Paul that we know.

And you would think that after so many years, everything would be clear now,
at least clearer and clearer.

But that is not quite the case.

For a whole three chapters, Paul grapples with one question.

Why don't the people of Israel turn to Jesus?

What became so clear to Paul himself at one point in his life,
that Jesus is the Messiah,
many others do not see.

Paul asks himself: How does this fit together?

that God has called Israel to be his people

- and that God's faithfulness also remains,

because otherwise one could not believe anything at all in him -,

but that not all have yet come to believe in Jesus?

For three chapters he circles around this question, but he does not resolve it.

Not in the sense that everything would be clear and simple afterwards.

God's plan of salvation is not a riddle or a puzzle,

at the end of which there is a clear solution, a definition and certainty.

It is a mystery.

It remains a mystery.

And even the wise Paul can and must leave that at the end.

IV.

Today we celebrate the Sunday of Trinity.

There, too, it is about a mystery.

It is about the mystery: What is God like?

That is not a riddle or puzzle,

and the Trinity thing is not a solution to it.

That would already be mathematically wrong,

because three is not one and one is not three.

But who mocks: "You Christians can't even calculate",

has already asked the wrong question.

The question about the triune God is not a theory question.

It is a question of life.

How does he meet us,
and how do we encounter him?

And how can we talk about it?

God "is" not triune,
at least not in the way we can say: A chair has four legs.

He "is" not triune in the sense,
that we would then have the answer and the riddle would be solved.

"God is triune," is more like a wondering description,
that tries to say what is too big for words.

"God is triune," it means:

We - we Christians today and the many who came before us -,
we have experienced him in this way, as Creator, as Son, as Holy Spirit.

We can distinguish that,
and at the same time he is one God.

I would like to trace this through three mysteries:

The mystery of life,
the mystery of love
and the mystery of faith.

V.

Life - it is a mystery.

You can research it as much as you want -
in the end, what remains is the amazement
that you have been given this unique, special life,
that you can jump and sing,
that you are a part of this world and that you recognize that.

And when we say: God is the creator -
then we dive into this mystery, because with that we say:

Your life is not a coincidence.

You are wanted.

You are a beloved child of God.

Your life has a where from.

Love - it is a mystery.

You can immerse yourself in it as much as you like -
in the end you will be amazed that such a thing is possible:
that you can love
and that someone tells you: You are valuable and wonderful.

And when we say: Jesus Christ is God's Son
and in him God shows himself in a very unique way
and leads us along the path of life -
when we say that, then we dive into this mystery,
because it means:

In Jesus you encounter God's love.

He goes to the greatest depths for you and with you;

He shows you how to be truly human, with courage and compassion;

he is your Brother and Savior;

through him you find life, here and in eternity.

And then **faith** - it too is a mystery.

For who has his own faith in his hand?

That's where it starts.

Faith is a gift, beyond your reach and also fragile
and yet of a power that can carry you through so much.

Faith is invisible,

but we see how it changes people and the world.

And when we say: God is Holy Spirit -

then we mean:

We believe that God is at work today,
not just somehow, but concretely in our lives.

We believe that he has something in mind for us and is moving us.

We believe that our faith is not an illusion,
but God's living power in us.

VI.

The journey with God is a journey into mystery.

There are moments of clarity and recognition on this path.

And there are moments when you realize how little you actually understand.

I have become fond of God and his mystery.

I don't have to understand everything.

One thing is enough for me: He understands me.

God holds everything in his hands, the whole world,
the visible and the invisible, and you and me.

He looks at me and my life and says: Follow me.

I follow this path with God.

Sometimes we are close, sometimes I am far from him,
but again and again he calls me.

And I try to understand him more and more.

But at the end there is not recognition and understanding and insight.

At the end, there is wonder and praise and rejoicing
and a mystery into which I can surrender.

Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God!

*How unsearchable his judgments,
and his paths beyond tracing out!*

*'Who has known the mind of the Lord?
Or who has been his counsellor?'*

*'Who has ever given to God,
that God should repay them?'*

For from him and through him and for him are all things.

To him be the glory for ever!

Amen.

And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding,
keep your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.