

Sermon on Holy Trinity about Romans 11, 33-36 2022 in BXL (IV)

Greeting: The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

Bible: 33 Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways! 34 "For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been his counsellor?" 35 "Or who has given a gift to him that he might be repaid?" 36 For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen.

Sermon: *Opening – Who or what is God?:* Who is God? And how is God to be thought? What can I hold on to? Difficult questions that not only make us ponder and perhaps even swim in conversation with non-Christians. I know from myself that these questions can also question my own faith, perhaps even disturb it. What is my own image of God based on? Does it correspond to the truth?

The Feast of Trinity takes up these thoughts in particular. In the readings we have heard some hints about the nature of God, images have been put before us. The Apostle Paul tries to make it clear, against the background of God's turning to us human beings, that God is the very other. The one who is foreign, the one who cannot be fathomed, the one who cannot be investigated.

That is why Paul warns against arrogance. In his case, he is primarily concerned with the arrogance of Christians towards the Jews, as the originally chosen people of God. That the nature of God is higher and deeper and wider than our limited human imagination. That the "peace of God is higher than all understanding" (Phil 4:7), as the preacher says it with words of the apostle at the end of the sermon. God's grace and care for people cannot be thought of in human categories, God cannot be put on a doctrinal chain.

Part 1 – Out into wideness: Theologians are often quick to be sure and certain when it comes to supposedly recognised insights and truths. I do not exclude myself from this. After all, I may not have studied justice/law, but I did study theology for several years of my life, and the church libraries are full of clever insights, findings, explanations and magisterial statements and determinations. But can the nature of God really be fathomed? Put between book covers? What does it mean when we confess the nature of God as "triune in Father, Son and Holy Spirit"? - Quicker than most people would like, we come to the limits of knowledge and are fishing in the mud.

Are they limits of knowledge? Or is it perhaps rather that wide spaces open up before us that leave us speechless; into which we perhaps neither dare to go out, because it would mean the abandonment of our old attitudes and worlds, nor into which we could set out without help at all, because we lack the means to do so? "...you set my feet on wide open spaces." (Psalm 31:9b), the Psalm says. We are amazed by this wide space, which we can only recognise and experience as a wide space of freedom because God himself places us in it. There is an affection and grace at work here that is greater than the world, which we cannot grasp with our minds because it is simply too different.

Part 2 – Mystery beats theology: The poet and theologian Christian Lehnert makes it clear that the word "theology", borrowed from the Greek, can be understood in two ways. On the one hand, it is the teaching or speaking of God. But I can also understand it as God's speaking. Then it is no longer about doctrinal buildings, but about God's address to me, about His ways with us human beings, with me, out of affection, and love and grace. Then it is about Jesus Christ, the powerful Word of God the Father, who through His Holy Spirit calls into being, makes alive, lets breathe, absolves, forgives and redeems.

Thorough theological research and thinking is of course important. But it only achieves its goal if it is understood as God's address, which teaches me God's greatness and thus leads to praise and worship. It is not about final knowledge. It is not about being able to explain everything. To have an answer on every question. Unfathomable is the height and depth and breadth of the divine being. Nothing remains here but wonder and adoration and praise to "God in the name of Jesus in the power of the Holy Spirit." Worshipful liturgy is an expression of this. "Liturgy is prayed theology," it is said. If I believe God to be the unfathomably high, deep and wide, then that finds expression in the celebration of my divine worship service - then boundaries of this world are transcended, God sets my feet on wide space and I can break out into the expanse of true freedom.

I know a family that has not been coming to worship for a few years because they say that worship has nothing to do with real life. Exactly, they are right. And yet it is also completely wrong. For worship is about something that cannot be fathomed and grasped with human mind and knowledge. It is about something higher, but which affects me, makes itself tangible to me and breaks into my life from outside. There were and are thinkers who believe that things that are not conceivable and cannot be described with words of the mind do not exist. If that were so, God does not exist. Yes, God is somehow conceivable to some extent, but as soon as it becomes concrete, He gets lost, blown away in the openness of sounds, colours, images. Thought in human categories, God does not exist. And that is why He cannot be justified in discussions with non-believers. God is recognisable in Jesus Christ, but in the next moment he is raptured, no longer tangible. - Despite all communication in word and sacrament, God is and remains a mystery.

Part 3 – You cannot think but experience God: Nevertheless, we believe and confess God. God may not be completely conceivable, describable or explainable, but God is truly experienceable! He shows himself in images, sounds, words, whole languages. These are not always perceptible, certainly not always understandable, but nevertheless people have always reported them and we too come into contact with God. It happens in address and response. The Bible proclaims that God makes himself perceptible through his word - that is, through sound and voice. This is preceded by the breath that conditions the word. Breath is the breath of God. That which God also breathes into us during our creation to make us come alive until we breathe this spirit out again. This breath enables us to respond with praise to God. This is how relationship of life comes into being. It is here - in the living relationship with God - that man's destiny is found. The alternative would be to be trapped in this world, cut off, a pressure on the chest that does not allow us to breathe freely. - Yes, the family mentioned is right, worship has nothing to do with *my little world* - and that is good! Worship, God's address to me through His word and my response in prayer and praise opens the doors out of this world into a wider space.

Aim – The aim in God: God leads into the wide, but not through the mind. God sends direction and comfort, even in and for the moment when thinking is no longer possible: in immaturity, in old age, in dying, in death. It is not for nothing that Scripture says (Mt 21:16b): "Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings you have prepared praise for yourself." - We can experience God in being touched by His Holy Word, in the celebration of the divine service, the reception of the sacraments, especially in the strangeness of liturgy. Connected with this, my life is directed towards a goal. Therefore, the amazement, the adoration with

the deep breath at the beginning remains: O what a depth of richness ... To Him be glory for ever and ever! Amen.

Blessing: And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.