

Sermon for 2017 Yr A Trinity Sunday  
Preached Sunday June 11, 2017 at St. James', Mount Vernon  
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# GOD'S TREBLE HOOK

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Today is Trinity Sunday. A day which is devoted to the mysterious doctrine of the Trinity – a doctrine that even the most scholarly academics have trouble explaining at times. It is no secret then, why Trinity Sunday is almost always reserved for the Seminarian to preach. The Interpreters Bible Dictionary defines the Trinity as the coexistence between the Father the Son and the Holy Spirit in the unity of the Godhead. Sounds simple enough, right? The difficult part about the doctrine of the Trinity is not necessarily defining it but instead comes with trying to explain it in detail because too much explanation to one side or the other leads one to sound heretical; and believe me it is easier to do than you think...you should have heard the discussions in my systematic theology course. This morning however, instead of trying to explain the doctrine of the Trinity in all of its glory, I would like to offer you a different way to think about the Trinity. A different perspective if you will on how I understand the Trinity to be a tool for our lives. To begin, I will start with part of a short story.

## 2. SEQUENCE 2 – MY FISHING STORY

As you will come to learn this summer, I am a fisherman and love absolutely everything there is to love about fishing. From baiting the hook, to wading through the cool water of the river on a hot summer day, to the rhythm of the fly rod in my hand as I cast each fly, fishing is my own paradise. However, fishing was not all that spectacular when I first started learning. In thinking back about my earliest experiences as a young fisherman, I recall becoming very frustrated at times with how things were going. It seemed that each time I had a tug on my line and tried to reel in the fish, I would reel in a fishless hook. Not only was the fish gone but the worm I worked so hard to find was gone as well. As I'm sure you can imagine, this was very disappointing for a young fisherman and it quickly placed doubt in my mind about my fishing abilities and my future as a fisherman.

### 3. SEQUENCE 3 – DOUBT

Doubt, is a common thread that weaves its way through our lectionary readings this morning, and most especially the Old Testament and Gospel readings. If you will recall, our Old Testament reading ends just before the LORD announces to Abraham and Sarah that they will have a child. Knowing that it was nearly impossible for her to rear a child in her old age, the first thing Sarah does when she hears the annunciation is laugh., Doubt was already in her mind, even though the announcement came right from the LORD himself. In our gospel, the word “doubt” occurs right within the text. Verse 28:17 states, “And when they saw him, they worshiped him, but some of them doubted.” The disciples, even though they could see the resurrected Jesus with their own two eyes, doubted that it was really him or that he was even there. The disciples doubted, just as I doubted that there were really fish in the river after coming up with an empty hook time and time again, even though I could see the fish swimming right past my feet.

### 4. SEQUENCE 4 – MATTHEW’S DOUBT

Matthew brings doubt into the Gospel because doubt is how he makes theological sense about discipleship and about the future mission of the church. You see for Matthew, discipleship must necessarily carry with it doubt, even if it is just the smallest bit, because Matthew understands that if there is anything antithetical to faith, it is certainty. Doubt is okay. Therefore, it was no accident that in Matthew’s Gospel, Jesus appears to those who doubted as opposed to those who were perfect believers. And why did Jesus appear to the doubters? Please allow me to return to my fishing story to help illustrate the answer.

### 5. SEQUENCE 5 – SECOND HALF OF MY FISHING STORY

One afternoon after being fed-up with losing most of my fish I was just about to call it quits when my dad, who was fishing alongside me and having great success, said “Seldon, why don’t you try another lure...here how about this one?” and he pointed to a lure in my tackle box which would become my most trustworthy and favorite lures of all time. It was a Rapala, pumppernickel colored crawfish with a treble hook. With doubt still in my mind, I tied the lure to the end of my line, gave it a cast into the Rappahannock, and within 10 seconds I had hooked a fish. Ecstatic, I quickly reeled in the fish, plucked it out of the water and gave it the infamous holy kiss like bassmaster Jimmy Houston. This is probably not the holy kiss that Paul was talking about in his letter to the Corinthians by the way. Just to be sure that it wasn’t dumb luck, I casted the lure several more times that afternoon and just about every time that lure hit the water, I hooked a fish. My doubt quickly faded.

## 6. SEQUENCE 6 – THE TREBLE HOOK AND THE TRINITY

One little hook made all the difference in the world for me. Why? Because for those of you who don't know, a treble hook actually consists of three hooks that branch off of one main stem. Therefore, the fisherman is three times more likely to hook a fish. This is where I see the beauty of the Trinity beyond its doctrinal explanation. The Trinity provides for us three different ways that we can become hooked on God and God's love. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit – three different likenesses of God, yet all one Godhead, just like the treble hook which is three small hooks, yet still one hook. Three different ways we can learn about God, three different ways we can learn to love God, to server one another, to be like Jesus, and to “let it be like this, when God created,” just as Ft. Charles taught us last week.

## 7. SEQUENCE 7 – JESUS APPEARS TO THE WAIVERING COMMUNITY

Jesus appears to the wavering community of doubters in Matthew's Gospel, because he, like my father, knew that they didn't want to give up believing. Jesus knew that the disciples had all they needed right there with them to grow their faith, they just didn't realize it; just as I didn't realize that I had all I needed to catch fish right there in my tackle box. And thus, Jesus commanded the disciples to go forth and make disciples of all nations, baptizing in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit; baptizing with God's treble hook.

## 8. SEQUENCE 8 – COMMUNITY

But how does this grow their faith you may be wondering? Jesus provides this command because he knows and understands the importance of community. If you may recall, the Christian community in the time of Matthew's Gospel was very small, and they were constantly trying to define themselves over and against a Jewish and gentile population. Therefore, Jesus knew that the only way for the disciples to grow in their faith was to be with and surround themselves with others who could hold them responsible and others who could share in the faith. And how do you get others to share? You go fishing with the treble hook. , Knowing that it is God's love that unites the hook and is a way for one to learn about God, you hook other people onto this love and bring them into the community to share in God's most holy and redemptive plan.

## 9. SEQUENCE 9 – GO FORTH AND DO LIKEWISE

Therefore as we go forth from this place this morning, and as disciples of Christ, we must go forth and carry out Christ's command as well. Go out into the world, remembering that you carry with you God's treble hook. Spread the love of God to a non-believer, greet each other with a Holy Kiss, bring a doubter into the church so that they can be created new in the waters of holy baptism, just as Nathan, Aiden, and Lucas were created new last Sunday. Bring someone into the church who has lost their faith so that they can be fed and nourished with the most holy of meals, which we are all about to share together in just a few moments. We are not called to be individual believers, but instead are called to be a community and more importantly a community and a church for the world. To be a Christian means to be in community, to invite others into the community, and to actualize what it means to "let it be like this" – to be like, live like, and love like Jesus. In nomine Patris, et Filii, et Spiritus Sancti. Amen.