

9th November 2025 – Richard Saint
Three yet One
Matthew 3:13-17

1. “The most mysterious paradox of God is The Trinity” – why do you think this is?
 - a. Richard suggested it might be because it speaks into the question at the centre of our seeking after God – What is God like in himself? How do you think the Trinity relates to this question?
2. Richard used three statements to define the doctrine of The Trinity. Go through these statements together, looking at the suggested passage(s) from Scripture which highlight each statement.

<ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. God is Three persons <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. John 16:7 ii. Matth 3:13-17 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> b. Each person is fully God <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. John 1:1 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> c. God is One <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. Deut 6:4-5 ii. Isaiah 45:6 iii. Romans 3:30 iv. James 2:19
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3. Which of the three statements do you find easiest to understand and which do you find hardest? Why do you think this is?
4. Do you find it easy to hold the complexity of The Trinity in mind without trying to simplify it? Do you find it a comfort to know that we are not expected to be able to mentally hold the fullness of its mystery?
5. Richard chose to spoke on a single phrase which The Trinity demonstrates, “Deep Dependence”.
 - a. “The Trinity shows us that God cares about, desires for, and has created us to be in relationship.” What does this mean to you?
6. However, our human relationships do not meet this need. Richard said, “they never will and were never designed to”. What do you think of this statement? Do you agree?
7. We were created for deep dependence upon God who is the only source of perfect, intimate, vulnerable, inseparable, undivided, faithful relationship. This is in sharp contrast to our usual war cry of “I am my own person” and society’s understanding of “independence” as the goal of existence.
 - a. How can we ensure we strive for deep dependence rather than destructive independence?

Below is the devotion that part-inspired this talk. Take some time to read through the devotion and the Scripture that it is based upon. Discuss together and then pray for each other.

Daily Devotion Passage

“WALK PEACEFULLY WITH ME through this day. You are wondering how you will cope with all that is expected of you. You must traverse this day like any other: one step at a time. Instead of mentally rehearsing how you will do this or that, keep your mind on My Presence and on taking the next step. The more demanding your day, the more help you can expect from Me. This is a training opportunity, since I designed you for deep dependence on your Shepherd-King. Challenging times wake you up and amplify your awareness of needing My help. When you don't know what to do, wait while I open the way before you. Trust that I know what I'm doing, and be ready to follow My lead. I will give strength to you, and I will bless you with Peace.

Scripture that inspired this devotion:

- Exodus 33:14
 - He said, “My Presence will go with you, and I will give you rest”
- Deuteronomy 33:25-26
 - Your bars are iron and bronze; and as your days, so is your strength. There is none like God, O Jeshurun, who rides through the heavens to your help, majestic through the skies”
- Hebrews 13:20-21
 - Now may the God of peace, who brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant, make you complete in everything good so that you may do his will, working amongst us, that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory for ever and ever. Amen.
- Psalm 29:11
 - May the Lord give strength to his people! May the Lord bless his people with peace!

2nd November 2025 – Thelma Edwards**Present yet Hidden****Psalm 139**

1. Thelma used air and gravity to illustrate 'Present yet hidden'.
 - a. Can you think of other examples from everyday life?
2. Do we need faith to know His presence? If so, how do we get faith?
 - a. Hebrews 11: v6: says that *"without faith it is impossible to please God because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.* Verse 1 explains that *"faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see"* and Verse 3 says that it is *"by faith we understand that the universe was formed at God's command so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible."*
3. If God is hidden, when we pray, could it feel like we are talking to the air, to a void? What do we imagine when we pray. Do we have an image in mind? Is there anything that helps you know God's presence when you pray?
4. We talk about coming into God's presence and it is all imagery: kneeling at his feet, bowing before the throne but what exactly is God's presence? Can we describe God's presence?
5. Some people speak of 'thin places' where the distance between heaven and earth appears to be very thin. These are the places where the presence of God can be experienced - like Jacob. We read of his encounter with God in Genesis 28. He was on a journey and had stopped for the night, laying down to sleep in the open. He had a dream in which he saw a staircase resting on earth with its top reaching to heaven and the angels of God were ascending and descending on it. There above it stood the LORD and He spoke to Jacob giving Him a promise for the future. When Jacob woke up, he said *'Surely the LORD is in this place and I didn't know it'*. In Genesis 22 Abraham encountered God through a ram caught in a thicket and in Exodus 3 Moses through a burning bush.
 - a. I wonder if you can think of any 'thin places' in your journey with the Lord? What was it about them that made them thin places? How are you different because of those moments?
6. Have you experienced wilderness times or what some term as the dark night of the soul when you do not experience His presence? How long did it last? How did you regain the experience of God's presence again?
7. Encounters with God do not have to be spectacular events. In the 17th century, there was a monk called Brother Lawrence who spoke of being aware of God in the routine everyday tasks. His writings have been gathered into a book called *The Practice of the Presence of God*. I believe we can be aware of His presence if we accept He is with us all the time and then tune into becoming aware of Him in our daily lives, actively looking for Him. Maybe a red traffic light that prevents us from being involved in an incident ahead of us. Maybe a failure to book a flight or a holiday only to find something unpleasant happened to those who were successful in this arrangement. Or having someone on our mind and then unexpectedly meeting them in the street or learning later they had been in need of our prayer. Some people call these times 'co-incidences' but I like to think of them as 'God incidences. Such guidance confirms to me the presence of God.
 - a. Can you share any 'God incidences' in your routine daily life?
8. How can we meet the challenge to BE the presence of God in the world?

Familiar poem: Footprints in the Sand

One night I dreamed I was walking along the beach with the Lord. Scenes from my life flashed across the sky. In each, I noticed footprints in the sand. Sometimes there were two sets of footprints; other times there was only one. During the low periods of my life I could see only one set of footprints, so I said, "You promised me, Lord, that walk with me always. Why, when I have needed you most, have you not been there for me?" The Lord replied, "The times when you have seen only one set of footprints, my child, is when I carried you."

26th October 2025 – Sarah Mallett

Unlimited yet Bounded

Philippians 2:1-13

1. The sermon opened with the idea that God is “*unlimited yet bounded*.” How do you respond to paradoxes in your faith? Do they strengthen your wonder or challenge your understanding of God?
2. Our “modern” culture often tries to live entirely in the *immanent*—the physical and visible. Where do you see evidence of God’s *transcendence* (beyond us) and *immanence* (with us) in your own life or community?
3. Philippians 2 says Jesus “*made himself nothing*.” What strikes you most about God willingly taking on the limits of humanity? How does this shape your understanding of what true humility looks like?
4. The sermon explained that humility is not thinking less of yourself, but thinking of yourself less. How easy or difficult do you find it to hold together confidence in your worth and a humble heart?
5. What forms of *false humility*—such as self-deprecation, people-pleasing, or “humble-bragging”—are you most tempted by? How can you spot when humility has turned into something “false”?
6. Romans 12:3 speaks of “*sober judgment*.” What helps you form an honest and balanced view of yourself? Are there voices or influences that distort that view? Consider the two following points which came from a song (Boldly I approach the throne) that we sang at the 11am and the illustration of various mirrors, as you think about these questions:
 - a. We sang “When Satan tempts me to despair...” and we considered the “mirrors” that show us false image of ourselves (too puffed up, distorted, unclean, or too diminished).
 - b. We sang “I’m face to face with love himself, His perfect spotless righteousness” and we considered how we as followers of Jesus are “In Christ” – we are identified with Him.
7. When we have an accurate self-evaluation of ourselves (found in God / In Christ) we receive the security that allows us to live humbly and can choose to lay down our rights. However we often find ourselves clinging to our “*rights*.” What “rights” do you find hardest to lay aside in order to love or serve others?
8. In what practical ways can we “have the same mindset as Christ Jesus” in our homes, workplaces, or church life this week? What might humility look like in action?
9. Paul links humility with unity in the church. Why or how do you think these two go hand in hand?
10. Philippians 2 ends with every knee bowing before Christ – in recognition of the one who is greater in every way than us. How might a deeper grasp of Jesus’ humility lead us into more heartfelt worship and greater humility in how we live?

19th October 2025 – Richard Saint**Bitesize Church – What heart is pleasing to God? – Ready****Matthew 25:1-13**

1. Read the parable of Jesus from Matthew 25
 - a. What points do you think Jesus was trying to make?
2. Richard said that one of the points Jesus was making was that “entry into the Kingdom of Heaven is a personal responsibility, not something that can be borrowed from someone else”. It is not sufficient to simply hear the Good News of who Jesus is and what he has done. There is a response to that message required. Using the train analogy, it is not sufficient to only hear the tannoy announcement, each person must ensure they have got their own ticket.
 - a. How might this affect your faith and your investment in it?
 - b. Does this provide some personal motivation to invest in your own discipleship?
3. Jesus’ second point relates not to the future life but to life right now. A “ready heart” needs to be ready for what God asks of us now. A heart that is ready leads to three things:
 - a. Experiencing life with God more deeply
 - b. More resistance to temptation
 - c. Making most use of the opportunities God provides you
 - i. What do you think of these three results of having a ready heart?
4. The messages of Jesus’ parable are found once again in Paul’s letter to the Ephesians (Eph 5:15-17)
 - a. “Be careful then how you live, not as unwise people but as wise, making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil. So do not be foolish but understand what the will of the Lord is.”
 - i. What parallels can you find between Paul’s words and Jesus’ parable?
5. Pray for each other that you would have hearts that are ready to respond to God’s call on your life now and into the future.

12th October 2025 – William Hazelton
Unchanging yet Responsive – Jonah 3:1-10

1. Awe and familiarity. We see this balance in the first line of the Lord's Prayer. We see this throughout the current sermon series. How do you find holding this balance?
2. Malachi 3.6. Read the verse in its context. What does this teach us about God's nature?
3. What does it mean to you in personal terms and in the life of the church to say we have a God who does not change? Perhaps share bible verses which you have found helpful and reassuring in times of trouble or when your relationship with God has seemed distant.
4. We have an identity in Christ – who never changes. We can rest in Christ knowing we are accepted, we are secure and we are significant. There are some bible quotes on the next page. Take time to consider these and how we can be helped by dwelling on and experiencing such truths. How we can use such verses if tempted (Satan is the "father of lies" – John 8.44.)?
5. The past, the present and the future. How helpful is it to look at situations we experience bearing in mind these 3 things? Maybe what God has done, what God is doing, and what God will do. Can this assist if we are finding things difficult?
6. Does God change his mind? If he does, does that indicate he was wrong initially? Or is it the case that God's attitude is a present attitude or intention with respect to the situation as it exists at that moment; and as the situation changes then God's attitude may change? Consider Exodus 32.9-14 and Jonah 3.1-11.
7. How does the fact that God is a responsive God encourage us. Consider Luke 11.1-12 and the call to pray.
8. God is the God of the unexpected. He is Spirit. Consider John 3.8. How open are we to recognising him and going where he leads?
9. Take time to pray for one another

Our identity in Christ

I am accepted

God says:

- I am his child (John 1.12)
- I am Christ's friend (John 15.5)
- I am united with the Lord and I am one spirit with him (1 Corinthians 6.17)
- I have been bought with a price; I belong to God (1 Corinthians 6.19-20)
- I am a member of Christ's body (1 Corinthians 12. 27)
- I have been adopted as God's child (Ephesians 1.5)
- I have direct access to God through the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 2.18)
- I have been redeemed and forgiven of all my sins (Colossians 1.14)
- I am complete in Christ (Colossians 2.10)

I am secure

God says:

- I am freed from condemnation (Romans 8.1-2)
- I am assured that all things work together for good (Romans 8.28)
- I cannot be separated from the love of God (Romans 8.35-39)
- I am confident that the good work God has begun in me will be perfected (Philippians 1.6)
- I am a citizen of heaven (Philippians 3.20)
- I have not been given a spirit of fear but of power, love and self control (2 Timothy 1.7)
- I can find grace and mercy in times of need (Hebrews 4.16)
- I am born of God and the evil one cannot touch me (1 John 5.18)

I am significant

God says:

- I am the salt of the earth and the light of the world (Matthew 5.13-14)
- I am a branch of the true vine, Jesus a channel of His life (John 15.1 and 6)
- I have been chosen and appointed by God to bear fruit (John 15.16)
- I am a personal, Spirit empowered witness of Christ's (Acts 1.8)
- I am a minister of reconciliation for God (2 Corinthians 5.17-21)
- I am a fellow worker with God (2 Corinthians 6.1)
- I am seated with Christ in the heavenly realms (Ephesians 2.6)
- I am God's workmanship, created for good works (Ephesians 2.10)
- I can approach God with freedom and confidence (Ephesians 3.12)
- I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me! (Ephesians 4.13)

I am not the great "I am." But by the grace of God I am what I am.
(See Exodus 3.14; John 8.24, 28, 58; 1 Corinthians 15.10.)

5th October 2025 – Jenny Campbell

Compassion and Jealousy – Song of Songs 8:5-7 and Exodus 34:6-7; 20:5

1. How do you think compassion and jealousy can work together?
 - a. Is it harder for people to hold these two ideas together than for God to do so?
2. The Song of Songs passage opens with “Who is that coming up from the wilderness, leaning upon her beloved?” Jenny spoke of this passage representing either individuals or The Church leaning upon God.
 - a. What might it look like for the church to lean upon God?
 - b. What might it look like for you to lean more fully on God?
3. The jealousy of God displays a love that desires to fiercely hold onto us, God’s love pursues us. God desires for nothing else, no idol, to “have you”.
 - a. How does that make you feel? It might be quite a mixture of emotions.
 - b. Is it more complicated to accept because of human experiences of “jealous love”?
 - c. How is God’s jealous love different to humanity’s jealous love?
4. Jenny spoke about God’s love being stronger than death, blazing greater than any fire, being more powerful than the strongest floods. Nothing can stand in the way of God’s love.
 - a. How might this truth help us when we are facing difficulty?
 - b. Read Isaiah 43:1-2 for more of God’s promises for times of difficulty
5. During the service we sang the phrase, “Yes, Jesus loves me”. How much do you believe this?
 - a. Do you yearn for a greater experience of God’s love?
 - b. Have you prayed for the Holy Spirit to help you to experience / know / understand God’s love for you more?

28th September 2025 – Ian Roberts
Emotional yet A Rock – Luke 22:40-45

1. How do you experience God personally? [We all have different ways of doing this]
2. Do you agree that God is unchanging and always faithful?
 - a. What are your experiences of the 'rock-like' quality of His character?
 - b. This could be a good time to reflect on some of the verses included below the questions titled 'The unchanging nature of God'
2. Do you have a Secret Place where you find it the easiest to 'meet with God'?
3. A number of God's emotions were mentioned in the talk.
 - a. Are there of God's emotions that are particularly important to you and resonate with you?
4. When your emotions are running high; what do you find is the best way to bring them to a good place so that you can make wise decisions? [Your way may be helpful to others]
5. The reading was from Luke 22:40-45. This is a very moving passage.
 - a. What does it say to you about Jesus and perhaps about your own struggles too?
6. What do you think about the oft quoted "Hate the sin and love the sinner"? Do you think it is an accurate phrase? Do you find it useful?
7. Ian put forward the idea that as we are made in the image of God, and that God is love, then we are in our deepest selves also love.
 - a. What do you feel about that idea and how might it affect the way you think about yourself and others?

The Unchanging Nature of God

1. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and today, and forever. Hebrews 13:8
2. For I am the Lord, I do not change; therefore you, O sons of Jacob, are not consumed. Malachi 3:6
3. Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change. James 1:17
4. God is not a man, so he does not lie. He is not a human being, so he does not change his mind. Numbers 23:19
5. 'I am the Alpha and the Omega—the beginning and the end,' says the Lord God. 'I am the one who is, who always was, and who is still to come —the Almighty One'. Revelation 1:8
6. The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. Lamentations 3:22-23
7. Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever. Psalm 136:1
8. Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; his love endures forever. 1 Chronicles 16:34
9. May your steadfast love and faithfulness always protect me. Psalm 40:11

21st September 2025 – Richard Saint

Bitesize Church – What heart is pleasing to God? – Obedient

Matthew 21:28-32

1. Richard said, “It is easy to say something, it is harder to do it” – do you agree with this statement?
Play a quick game of charades to illustrate the point...
2. Read Matthew 21:28-32, what strikes you about this passage?
3. Richard drew out two points from Jesus’ story (below).
 - i. It is never too late to change your mind
 - a) The religious leaders spoke a good game but it would be the Tax Collectors and Prostitutes, groups often used to represent people who are not living according to God’s plan, that would be first to enter the kingdom of God. Why do you think this is?
 - b) Read the story of Zaccheus (Luke 19:1-10) – how does his story relate to this point?
 - ii. Being faithful to what God asks of us is something we do, not something we talk about.
 - a) The religious leaders were great at sounding obedient, but they didn’t do what God asked of them. Is this something we struggle with?
4. To illustrate the importance of “doing” regarding obedience Richard proposed a memory verse from Micah 6:8 – “What does the Lord require of you but to act justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with your God”
 - i. What does this verse teach us? How might we put this into action in our own lives?
5. A question for daily reflection: Do we live our faith or just talk about it?

14th September 2025 – Richard Saint**Almighty Creator yet Intimate Friend – Genesis 1:1-5 and John 15:15**

1. How does the idea of a Creator who “speaks things into being” from absolute nothingness shape the way you relate to God in worship and prayer?
2. Richard said that God’s “unquestionable authority” can feel dangerous or oppressive because of our human experience of tyranny.
 - a. How does it change things for you to hear that God’s authority is exercised in perfect justice, mercy and love?
3. John 15:15 calls disciples “friends” of Jesus. What surprises you about the idea that the sovereign God chooses friendship with us? How does that make you feel?
4. The sermon contrasted two temptations: treating God as only Almighty (too distant to care) or only friend (too familiar to do anything). Which temptation do you tend towards, and why?
5. Revelation 3:20 pictures Jesus knocking and offering to eat with us. What does “eating with” God suggest about intimacy and everyday relationship with Jesus? How might that reshape ordinary practices like prayer, mealtimes, or rest?
6. How would you explain (to a friend) the balance between reverence and intimacy in prayer? What phrases, posture, or rhythms help you hold both together?
7. When life feels overwhelming, which truth comforts you more: that God is Almighty and can act, or that God is a close friend who cares? Why? Could both be true for you at the same time?
8. The sermon invites us to “open the door” and to set aside time to talk with God. What practical habit could you begin (or re-start) that would help you live more consistently as God’s friend and honour him as Sovereign Creator?

Extra questions about worship

Richard opened the 11am service speaking a little about worship, specifically sung worship. A summary and some questions to help you explore the topic are found below:

Why we worship

1. God is worthy (Rev 4:10-11) – Worship is first about God’s glory, not how we are feeling
2. We are formed by worship (2 Cor 3:18) – As we worship God, we allow Him to transform our lives
3. Worship is a witness (Psalm 40:3) – Our worship proclaims the gospel to the world

Who is worshipping?

- We are fortunate to have a wonderful Worship Ministry Team at St James, but they are not the only worshippers, they do not worship on our behalf. They **lead us** in worship.
- An illustration might help:
 - Imagine a skyscraper, and worship is ascending the skyscraper.
 - The worship ministry team open the doors of the skyscraper and lead people in.
 - They don’t lead people to the lift where we can just stand and be carried to the top.
 - They lead us to the stairs and lead us up. The congregation must climb the stairs too.
 - Worship is a sacrifice, it is a giving of ourselves to God. Each person must engage in worship and choose to climb the stairs along with the worship ministry team.

Questions

1. Discuss why we worship – which reason resonates with you? Which hadn’t you thought of? What other reasons can you think of?
2. How can you help yourself engage more with worship; to not rely on the “lift” but use the stairs?
3. Discuss your own preferences of worship style. How can you worship fully even when your own particular preference is not met in every service?

7th September 2025 – Richard Saint**"The paradox of God – unfathomable yet comprehensible" – John 1:1-5,14**

1. How would you explain or describe God to someone else?
 - a. What is your answer based upon?
2. Why might we find ourselves desiring a “simpler God”, one that is easier to understand?
 - a. What risks does this have for our faith?

Read John 1:1-5

3. This was John’s best attempt at describing something so majestic, so magnificent, so full of splendour and mystery.
 - a. What stands out to you about these 5 verses?
 - b. Why do you think it is important that we recognise God as entirely “other”, entirely different to us?

Now read John 1:14, “And the Word became flesh and lived among us.”

4. What are your initial thoughts to these words?
5. John uses two words, “Word”, and “Flesh” and there could not be two more incompatible words.
 - a. The Word – otherness and majesty – all that we are not – everything unfathomable
 - b. Flesh – all that we are, solid, comprehensible, created, small, vulnerable, bounded, intimate, touchable, relatable.
 - c. Spend some time considering these two facets of God and what it means that God chose to present both to us.
6. The sermon warned against either diminishing the majesty of God leaving a simplified God who is not worth following or worshipping or diminishing the flesh-ness of God leaving us with a God who is too other-ly to think we could ever engage with or understand.
 - a. Have you ever found yourself leaning towards one of these?
 - b. How do we protect ourselves from simplifying God?
7. The sermon encouraged us to *“not shy away from the mystery and complexity of God but to let it prompt us to seek Him more deeply.”*
 - a. What questions or mysteries about God are you currently wrestling with, and how might they be invitations to deeper faith?
8. Grappling with paradox requires humility, since we will never fully understand God.
 - a. How can we cultivate humility in our faith while still growing in confidence about what we do know of God through Jesus?