

The Holy Trinity -- The First Sunday After Pentecost	(June 7, 2020)	1855
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May the God of peace fill you with all joy in believing!

II Corinthians 13:11-14

Finally, brothers, good-bye. Aim for perfection, listen to my appeal, be of one mind, live in peace. And the God of love and peace will be with you.

Greet one another with a holy kiss. All the saints send their greetings.

May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

When our visit with friends comes to an end, and it's time to get into the car, the last thing we say is "good-bye." "Good-bye" is often the last word we say before hanging up the phone. When we write a letter, the concluding word might well be "good-bye." "Good-bye" is one of those words we use so commonly that we tend to overlook its real meaning. It's a contraction of the Old English phrase, "God be with ye." What a very fitting word indeed for us Christians to use as a close for our visits and letters with one another. When we use the word "good-bye," we do well to think about its real meaning, and to truly wish and pray that God be with others.

At the end of his second letter to the Christians in Corinth, the Apostle Paul said "good-bye; God be with you." Then he elaborated: "May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all." These words are not unfamiliar to us, since we often use them for the benediction at the close of our worship services, and sometimes as the greeting from the pulpit before the sermon. Not only does Paul say, "God be with you," but notice how he specifically mentions each of the three persons of the Trinity; God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. The Grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God--God the Father, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you. The Triune God Be With You.

From cover to cover in the Bible; from beginning to end, God reveals himself to us as Triune--three separate, distinct, individual persons; Father, Son and Holy Spirit -- but one God. Already in Genesis 1, it is the Triune God who is active in creation. Verse 2 says, "The Spirit of God was hovering over the waters." The Gospel of John, chapter one, tells us that Christ "was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made." It is the Triune God who says, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness." Then if we go to the last page of the Bible, Revelation 22, we have pictured before us the glorious heavenly city, and there the throne of God the Father, and of Christ the Lamb; and the Holy Spirit says, "Come."

There is the counterpart to our text, the Old Testament benediction. Notice how

many times "The LORD" is mentioned: "The LORD bless you and keep you. The LORD make his face shine on you and be gracious unto you. The LORD look on you with favor and give you peace." This is the name of God that the priests were to put on the Israelites, the triple LORD, or if you will, the Triune LORD. How clearly the Trinity shines forth at Jesus' baptism. God the Son, Jesus was there at the Jordan River being baptized by John. God the Holy Spirit descended upon him in the form of a dove. And God the Father spoke from heaven: "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased." [Matthew 3] When Jesus ascended, he commanded us to baptize "in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit." Through and through, the Bible portrays to us the Triune God, so that if we were to try to discuss all the references to the Trinity in Scripture, we would be here all day.

We wonder how anyone could deny this most clear Scriptural truth of the Trinity. But there are those who do deny today, just as there were those who denied in the early church, making necessary the formulation of the Athanasian Creed. In order to deny the Trinity, one would have to throw the entire Bible out the window, and along with it goes the entire salvation that our Triune God has won. The Athanasian Creed is a clear and brief summary of what the Bible says. When we read it in a bit, you may not think that it is all that brief, but it is far more brief than if we were to read and study all the passages that serve as its basis. In unmistakable terms, the Athanasian Creed portrays the Bible's teachings of salvation through the Triune God, and aptly closes with the words: "This is the true Christian faith. Whoever does not faithfully and firmly believe this cannot be saved."

We teach and confess the Trinity. We open our worship services in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. We close our services with the benediction of the Trinity. But we sometimes have a tendency to think of God in a very general way that is too abstract and blurry -- simply God is God, instead of seeing the distinct and concrete personality of God, that he is three persons, and that we have a very special relationship with each of the three persons of the Trinity. We tend to simply say "good-bye" or "God be with you," instead of speaking in more definite and personal terms as Paul does when he says, "May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all."

God the Son is spoken of first, because it is through God the Son that we know God. "No one has ever seen God, but God the only Son, who is at the Father's side, has made him known." "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ." God the Son's relationship with us is described as grace, undeserved love, love toward undeserving sinners, hateful sinners, unlovable sinners. Christ's grace is so great that he left the heavenly throne to come and be with us, to live on our unworthy and unfit sinful earth, in order to fulfill God's law for us with his perfect life. Grace so great that he willingly went to the cross to bear the full punishment that we deserved for our sins, in order to make us his own for all eternity.

"The Lord Jesus Christ." How precious that three-fold name of our Savior is to us, each part of that name glowing with grace. The Lord, the one who has purchased and won us, with his holy precious blood and his innocent suffering and death. The Lord who has made us his own, to whom we belong, the one we are privileged to serve as our Lord. Jesus was the name he was given when he was born here on earth to save us with his grace, the name the angel told Mary and Joseph to give him, that name which means

Savior. "Christ" describes his saving office, the anointed one, the one chosen to carry out our redemption. Our relationship with God the Son is his pure unmerited grace, on which each one of us depends until the day we die. We remain unworthy, undeserving sinners every day of our lives, and the blood of Christ's grace must cleanse us every day. And it is by that grace alone that we enter heaven at last.

It is through our Lord Jesus Christ that we have been shown the love of God the Father, love that is self-sacrificing, love that is as infinite as God is infinite, love for us that has made us his children. Love of the Heavenly Father that sent his One and Only Son, love for us that sacrificed his One and Only Son, the love of God that "so loved the world that he gave his One and Only Son;" the God who "demonstrates his own love for us in this: while we were still sinners, Christ died for us." [Romans 5:8] "God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them." [II Corinthians 5:19] Our God and Father says, "I have loved you with an everlasting love."

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God are brought to us by the Holy Spirit, whose relationship with us was described in God's word last Sunday on Pentecost. The Holy Spirit is our contact with God. It is he who came to us when we were dead in sin, and made us alive to God by working the miracle of saving faith in our hearts through God's word, and he continues to bring the priceless gifts of God's salvation to us. We have the fellowship of the Holy Spirit. He is with us, together with us, one with us, sharing and giving to us, so that as he possesses all God's riches and blessings, so do we. The Holy Spirit stoops down to us and enfolds us in his fellowship in which is found all the grace and all the love, for through our fellowship with the Holy Spirit, we also have fellowship with God the Father and God the Son. All of the blessings of God come to us through a union with the Holy Spirit that is beyond our comprehension, fellowship with him. And it is the word of God that is the source of fellowship with the Holy Spirit. Through God's word the Holy Spirit has become one with us, and remains one with us.

The grace, the love and the fellowship are all interrelated and united, just as the three Persons of the Trinity are united as one inseparable God, in a way that we cannot comprehend. The love of God the Father and the grace of God the Son go hand in hand with one another. And they come to us through the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, the faith that he works in our hearts through God's word. Our salvation is through and through the working of our Triune God!

God has revealed himself to us as triune, not just to give us some interesting facts, so that we can mechanically state that he is one God, yet three persons; Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. God has graciously revealed himself to us as the Triune God he is, so that we might know him, that we might see what he has done for us, the redemption that he, our triune God, has won for us, that he might be with us, that we might be with him, for all eternity. "May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all."

Amen.

Praise and glory and wisdom and thanks and honor and power and strength be to our God for ever and ever! Amen.