

Trinity Sunday – June 12, 2022 Romans 5: 1-5

Lord, may the words of my mouth and the thoughts of each heart be acceptable in your sight, our Maker and Redeemer. Amen.

HAPPY TRINITY SUNDAY!! I know that today may not seem all that exciting to most of you, but it is an important day for the church! It used to be the 4th most important day in the church year. First comes Easter, then Pentecost (which we celebrated last Sunday), Christmas and then Trinity Sunday. In some church calendars, Trinity Sunday comes even before Christmas! Because Trinity Sunday celebrates the 3 ways that God relates to us, as Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

There is a true story, that took place in 1961 when Thomas Van Beek, who was then a 25 year old executive, needed to hire a personal secretary. After a long and discouraging procession of unpromising applicants, a bright, charming young lady came into his office for an interview. Her name was Miss Neef. Her references were impeccable, her typing and shorthand were more than adequate, and more importantly, she projected an aura of personal stability, confidence, and energy. Tom hired her on the spot.

After Miss Neef's first week on the job, Tom was sure he had found the perfect assistant. She was an executive's dream. When she answered the phone, she projected authority; when faced with emergencies, she was always calm. She never seemed to grow weary or frayed from the stress.

Miss Neef was tireless. At the end of a long day – even when her young employer was completely exhausted – she was always fresh and energetic. She never ceased to amaze him. He couldn't understand how she remained so energized, so on top of all the work.

After 12 years, Tom discovered the answer to that mystery. Miss Neef told him she was ready to retire. She didn't desire another job offer, she was simply ready to step down as his private secretary. Tom gracefully accepted her resignation and decided throw her a going away party fitting for such a dedicated professional. He was going to do it up right!

He pulled out all the stops, and then on that day, he froze dead in his tracks! For shortly after the guest of honor arrived – the guest of honor arrived. And the secret to Miss Neef's boundless energy was no longer a mystery. Where Tom had been certain for 12 years that his one secretary was doing the work of two people, he discovered that two people had been doing the work of one secretary. Miss Neef was actually two identical twin sisters sharing the same job! They had worked together so effectively and

seamlessly that Tom never suspected! Each worked half the time and they split the paychecks.

For more than a decade, the sisters worked together as one - communicating, pursuing one goal, and serving their employer - that no one knew, not even the person who spent 40 hours a week with them. They were truly two working as one!

I think that's a perfect example of how the Trinity works! Except there are 3 of them! They work together seamlessly because they are one. They communicate the same message. They pursue the same goal – that of saving all people. And they work tirelessly together so well that often we are not aware that it is actually 3 persons working as one!

Our lesson from Romans – mentions all 3 persons of the Trinity and the gifts they give us; But first let's start with some background. In the first 2 chapters of Romans, Paul has been emphasizing the pervasiveness of sin – that everyone has sinned and has fallen short of the glory of God. In Romans 3 and 4, Paul reminds his readers that in response to this problem, God the father sent Christ to earth. Because of Christ's death and resurrection, we are now made right with God. As Luther's favorite verse says, "we are justified by faith apart from works prescribed by the law". WE are justified by faith.

Now Paul answers the question, "Now, what?" He looks around and sees that sin continues to influence us, it continues to be a problem and suffering remains so acute that Paul reminds us in Chapter 8 that it can not separate us from God's love. And so the life of a believer is a mix of peace, hope, suffering and love. But in this passage Paul tells us we have been given 4 gifts from the Trinity.

Let's start in Chapter 5 with verse 1; Therefore since we are justified (Greek word means that justice has been done on our behalf – that we are made innocent, right and even holy before God. When God sees us, He doesn't see us, He sees His perfect Son, Jesus) by faith (Greek word means we rely on Jesus' work, we have confidence in what He has done for us before God) **This is our first gift!** We have been made innocent. We have been right with God. Jesus was the one who was handed over to death for our sins and was raised for our Justification. And we sometimes take that for granted.

Amy Grant has a song entitled, "I Have Decided", and the words are: "I have decided, I'm gonna' live like a believer, turn my back on the deceiver, ***I'm gonna live what I believe.*** I have decided being good is just a fable; I just can't 'cause I'm not able. I'm gonna leave it to the Lord." WE can't live right. NO matter how hard we try. And sometimes we get tired of even trying. There was only one person who could. His name is Jesus.

That brings us to our second gift. Therefore, since we are made right with God, by “faith” (by relying on what Jesus has done for us – instead of what we try to do) we have peace with God. **This is our second gift: Peace!** The word for Peace means “to set at one again”. Not only have we been made right with God, and declared innocent, We have been made *one again with God*, and what a gift that is! Righteousness and Peace go together. Isaiah 32:17 says, “The effect of righteousness will be peace.” We can breath a sigh of relief! WE are made innocent AND we have peace with God! We have all this through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul knew about real peace. He was a Roman citizen and had witnessed what the Pax Romana – the peace of Rome looked like. It was anything but peaceful. It was enforced through violence. Emperors killed their rivals, and any opposition to roman rule, was dealt with brutally in places like Judea and Britain.

And Paul had his own experience, when in Damascus Jesus knocked him to the ground and blinded him for 3 days: asking Saul why he was persecuting him. Then he removed the scales from Saul’s eyes and filled him with the Holy Spirit and called him Paul. Faith in what Jesus had done for him, produced in Paul’s life what all his efforts to keep the law and be right with God, never could: it gave him Peace. Only then did Paul know what true peace with God was really like. He had been made one with God again.

The third gift comes to us in verse 2: through Jesus Christ we have obtained (the better word would be “Received”) access (this is a really neat Greek word which literally means our “admission fee” has been paid. On a much lower scale - It’s like going to Cedar Point and walking up to the entrance gate and finding your ticket has already been paid for and you can start heading towards the rides you can draw near to all the fun! That’s what Jesus has done for us. He paid our admission price to enable us to draw near to God – to head towards God). Access is also the regular word used for ushering someone into the presence of royalty. This is the person who goes before you and with you to meet the Queen. To bring you into the presence of the one who rules. Jesus ushers us into the presence of the King of Kings. Not to be condemned, or judged, but to receive sheer underserved, unearned, unworthy kindness and grace of God!!

Through our Lord Jesus Christ through whom we have been ushered into the presence of the King of Kings - and to this grace in which we stand. This grace, (this gift, this joy, this divine influence – that’s what grace means) in which we stand. (Greek word for stand actually means “to establish, to abide, to stay,” in this grace. It is the same word that is used for covenant.) So, Jesus has made it possible for us to draw near to the grace of God not just temporarily or for a short time. But to be able to draw near to stay. As part of a

new relationship with God. Permanently!! It is also the word for a harbor or a haven, where ships come in. A safe place away from the dangers of the open seas. So long as we depend on our efforts we live lives that are like living on a storm tossed sea. Riding the waves up high one minute and down low the next. But now that we know the calm of depending on what God has done for us in Jesus, we have found a harbor; a safe place. And we rest in God's grace.

Let's review: Our first gift is being made innocent in God's eyes – being made right with God. Our second gift is Peace – the gift of breathing easy trusting what Jesus has done. Our 3rd gift is to be able to stand in grace forever! And it's even better than having a season pass to Cedar Point that has been paid for. It's like getting a lifetime pass into the presence of the King of Kings and God's kindness which we can't earn– for each of us - forever!

Our 4th gift is the hope of sharing the Glory of God. The rest of verse 2 says: and we boast in (Greek means we rejoice in) our hope of (it means to anticipate, to look forward to, to expect) sharing the glory of God. (in the Greek there is no word for sharing in this verse.) *The glory of God, is God's presence.* Like when Israel was in the wilderness the glory of God was with them in a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night. How could you share that? You can't cut cloud and fire in pieces and pass them around to share. The only thing we can look forward to, to anticipate- is being taken up into God's glory. Into God's presence. Our hope of being in God's glory/presence. It does not mean that things will always get better in this life. Or that tomorrow will even be better than today. But one day we will be taken up into the glory of God in heaven!! To experience the full presence of God! That truly seems almost too wonderful to believe.

There is a word for "glory" in Greek, which means honor, and dignity. And all of our lives we live and work, trying to bring praise and honor and dignity to God– trying to bring glory to God. And in the end God offers, God's glory to us! God's very presence, God's very self.

So far, we have heard about the first two persons of the Trinity a lot – God, the father and Jesus, the son. But Paul concludes this section by also telling us about the Holy Spirit, the third member of the Trinity. It is the first time he mentions the Holy Spirit in this book of Romans. Paul says in verse 5 that God's love has been poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit. **This is our 5th and final gift.** The Greek word for poured is not like pouring a glass of iced tea – some measured sharing from a pitcher. No, think rather that God's love has been poured into us, like water is poured into the street from a gushing fire hydrant. God gushes God's love into us through the Holy Spirit that has been

given to each of us. Whenever God wishes to send God's gifts into our lives – God sends them thru the Holy Spirit. God's love, peace, and the nudges God sends us, all come through the Spirit. That's why the Spirit is so crucial in our lives. It's the piece of the Trinity that lives inside us. That stays with us. That communicates God to us. That communicates with God for us. And even makes it possible for us to love God. We can't do that for ourselves either. And love others. The love of God is poured into us and through us! The Spirit works seamlessly with the Father and the Son, to make everything God created work together for good.

1st Gift is: We are made right, innocent before God by Jesus.

2nd Gift is: Peace with God

3rd Gift is: Access to Grace in which we stand forever

4th Gift is: Hope of being taken up into God's Glory/presence forever

5th Gift is: All of God's gifts come to us thru the Holy Spirit

All of these actions of the Trinity are actions on behalf of all people by God. These actions take place because we as humans are unable to live right – as God would like us to. Our need is such that only God in three persons can redeem, save and keep us.

Praise be to God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit.

Happy Trinity Day!!

Amen!