

Ben Libby
 Sermon
 June 7th, Trinity Sunday

To the I AM, the ONE LORD, yet three divine and distinct persons, coequal and coeternal, Father, Son, and Spirit be eternal glory! Amen! The Word of the LORD which forms a portion for our sermon text this morning are the last 4 verses of 2 Corinthians:

Finally, brothers, rejoice. Set things in order. Be encouraged. Agree with one another. Be at peace. And the God of love and peace will be with you. 12 Greet one another with a holy kiss. 13 All the saints greet you. 14 The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

The LORD's Unfathomable Gifts

- I. Unlimited Grace
- II. Undeserved Love
- III. Underrated Fellowship

This is the Word of The LORD!!! The congregation may be seated...

Mercy, Grace, and Peace ARE YOURS from your God and Father and from your Savior from sin, Jesus Christ. Dear fellow Redeemed

Curiosity killed the cat. You have all heard this phrase before. It is a warning really. It says that we shouldn't always dig too deep into things, because if we do, there could be deadly consequences.

There is wisdom behind this saying. There is absolutely some business that we should stay out of. But at the same time, people are curious by nature. Have you ever asked a question out of curiosity only to receive the response, "Why do you want to know?" When asking questions, this is always a good question to ask simultaneously.. Why do we want to know? What is the motivation behind our asking a question in the first place?

Today is Trinity Sunday. Our church calendar is largely based on events that happened in Church History. Christmas (Christ's birth), Lent (Christ's Passion), Easter (Christ's Resurrection). These are all events. But Trinity Sunday is different. It is not a Sunday based on an event, rather it's based on a teaching. It focuses on the teaching that is for the

most part unknowable. The Triune God, the 3-in-1 nature that is the LORD.

We just confessed the Athanasian Creed, which declares as plainly as possible all that goes into this doctrine. This creed is not as well known as the Apostles or Nicene Creed because frankly, it is long and largely repetitive. Even so, most of what we confess in it is what the Trinity is not more so than what it is. It is a glorious teaching, one that we cannot understand by reason, only by faith alone.

It is good to ask questions, even when it comes to religious topics. But no matter what the topic is, ultimately we have to let God speak for Himself. The bottom line is that sometimes we cannot understand certain things about God. Curiosity can kill the cat when we allow reason to dictate faith. When you can't understand something that you read in the Bible, you can react in a few different ways. It can cause you to research. You can also simply not understand it. The Bible is simple and easy to understand. The problem is that sometimes our understanding is just not up to

the task. At times like this, when reason “out-thinks” God, we need to just accept God for what His Holy Word declares.

Today we will not only look at the unfathomable nature of the Triune God but also the unfathomable gifts that Triune God gives us. It is truly incomprehensible that we have the blessings that Paul lists here; grace, love, and fellowship. It is far beyond what miserable sinners deserve. Yet, it is truly what we have been given! LORD, SANCTIFY US BY YOUR TRUTH, YOUR WORD IS TRUTH, AMEN!!!

Finally, brothers, rejoice. Set things in order. Be encouraged. Agree with one another. Be at peace. And the God of love and peace will be with you. 12 Greet one another with a holy kiss. 13 All the saints greet you.

Paul’s second letter to the congregation at Corinth is of a different nature than the first. The first letter is all about pointing out the errors that were going on in the church. The second letter has more of a tone of comfort and restoration. He had shocked and terrified their consciences in order to produce repentance. Now, he comforts them and urges them to forgive and to love.

In these final verses of 2 Corinthians, like we discussed last Sunday, Paul’s advice seems to go against what is going on in the world today. Rejoicing, encouragement, agreement with one another, and peace seem to be concepts that are a long way away. He is talking to different members of the same congregation, so this is a bit different. But even so, we here today are a ways away from this as well. **Greet one another with a holy kiss?** We wouldn’t even dare to shake hands...

We find ourselves in unique times. People are more separated than ever. Racial equality and social justice seem to be topics on the news daily. The virus that has plagued us still is keeping us down. Be encouraged? Really?

Even though things seem bleak, we nevertheless find ourselves rejoicing today. This is the first time in about 3 months that we have been allowed to worship in the house of God together. Yes, there are many

things that separate the people of this nation today. But for the people of this church, we find ourselves united once more. We even have the opportunity to take part in the Lord’s Supper. We might have to partake in a different way, but still, we thank God that He has given us the gift of His sacrament to be able to see His forgiveness of our sins here today!

Yet, that term is not found in the Bible. You can page through the Bible and not find a single use of the term “sacrament”. But that doesn’t mean that Scripture doesn’t teach it. It clearly does. We know that both baptism and the Lord’s Supper provide physical and tangible evidence that God forgives us our sins. “Sacrament” is not found in the Bible, but their establishment and function are clearly laid out.

The same is true for the word “Trinity”. Nowhere in Holy Scripture will you find that term. But the concept you will find all over. We read about it in our Gospel reading, the great commission, **“Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit”** The teaching is also found at Christ’s Baptism (Jesus in the water, the Spirit in the form of a dove, and the voice of the Father). The clear teaching of the 3-in-1 is everywhere. So also it is found here at the end of second Corinthians: **14 The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.**

This is a blessing that is so common you might take it for granted a bit. Personally, I use it to close every Bible class that I conduct. As common as this saying may be, Paul lists gifts that God gives us that really require further examination. All of these gifts are unfathomable mysteries, just like the teaching that is the Triune God. The first gift which is brought up is **The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ**

What is the grace of Jesus Christ? I think that’s a question that anyone here could answer. In its simplest terms, Grace is undeserved love. It is a product of God’s divine pity on us. It is the totality of His work in which He saved us.

An easy way to think about the five letter concept of GRACE is to let it be an anagram. GRACE- **God’s Riches At Christ’s Expense**. As Paul writes previously

in this same letter: **2 Corinthians 8:9 For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich.**

That is what Grace is. Quite simply it is the answer to all of our biggest problems. What is our biggest problem? It goes back to what the Triune God says. He says, **Be Holy for I the LORD you God am Holy.** The problem that we have with that is that we are not Holy. We are in fact the opposite of that. We are sinful. When we should have loved one another, instead we hated one another. When we should have done something, we in fact don't do it. When we should have refrained from doing something, we instead did it. What is the result of our sinfulness and lack of holiness? Condemnation! That means we end up dying in our sins and as a result, deserve eternal hellfire.

But instead of hellfire we have grace! It is undeserved love! What we deserved was God's wrath. What we get is the opposite. We get God's riches...at the expense of Jesus Christ. It is the great exchange. Where we should have suffered for our sin in hell forever, Jesus suffered for our sins on the cross in our place. And we get what He should have received, the reward for His Holy Righteousness. This doesn't make sense. But we are thankful that we get what we don't deserve, Christ's grace!

And of course, the first gift of **the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ** is related to the next gift, **the love of God.**

Even though the term "the Father" is not mentioned specifically, we know that the second person mentioned here is in fact the First Person of the Godhead. It was the love of the Father that set up the gift of grace from the Son. The Father looked at us and saw our despicable state of deadness and rebellion. He had pity on us and sent forth the Son to pay for our sins. As our Old Testament reading today declared, **"For I have no pleasure in the death of one who dies," says the Lord GOD. "Therefore turn and live!"** That is the whole aim of the love of the Father. He wants us to repent from our sinful ways,

and live. That is what spurred on the grace of Christ. It was the motivating factor for our salvation and restoration. **1 John 4:9 In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him.**

The result of His love is that we have an unlimited amount of grace streaming our way. Paul wrote in His letter to the Romans **But where sin abounded, grace abounded much more, 21 so that as sin reigned in death, even so grace might reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. (Rom 5:20-21 NKJ)** That means that there is no sin too abhorrent for God's grace to cover. Once again, this is not what we deserved or are entitled to in any way. It is purely a gift, and there is no limit to that extremely precious gift!

God's love for you is not limited in its extent. It's also not just limited to your spiritual life alone. It also happens in our physical earthly lives. Because of His love we were created and saved from our sin. But it also provides for your daily needs as well. Jesus spoke on this topic in **Matthew 6:31-33 "Therefore do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' 32 "For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. 33 "But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.** Since He has already provided for our biggest need, will He also not provide for our smallest?

Perhaps the gift that is the hardest to define and the easiest to forget about is the last gift Paul mentions. **the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.** What is the first thing you think of when it comes to fellowship? This is such a loaded term when it comes to our specific church body. It was the reason we formed in the first place. Certain bodies from which we came from previously underestimated exactly who they were supposed to be in fellowship with. Because of this, our spiritual forefathers and mothers were forced to leave and start their own church body.

Paul says much about fellowship. For me, what He says in this letter says much about it. **Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness? 15 And what accord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever? (2Co 6:14-15 NKJ)**

The implied answer to all of these questions is nothing. There should be zero relationship between all of these things. That is the whole point! We should speak and teach the same thing with those who share in this most precious gift of the Holy Spirit that is fellowship.

At the same time, fellowship is not just about who we shouldn't be yoked together with. Yes, that is one aspect to it. But it is also about the joy and blessings we receive from those others who we are in fellowship with! We should be thankful that we have other Christians who know the same truths that we do. We should rejoice in them, and help them whenever we can. God blesses us by being in a union with us. He also blesses us by being in union with each other! This is how and why Paul is able to start the way He does! **Finally, brothers, rejoice. Set things in order. Be encouraged. Agree with one another. Be at peace. And the God of love and peace will be with you.**

There is no way we would be able to do any of these things without the gift of the Holy Spirit! We have seen play out in recent events what happens when people don't agree with one another. This is not to say that we will agree perfectly with every other believer in all things. We all have different points of view and opinions. But once again, it is the love of God that ties everything Paul is saying here together. How are we to rejoice? How are we to be set in order? How can we be encouraged, in agreement, and in peace with one another? THROUGH THE LOVE OF GOD!!!! That is truly what unites us and at the end of the day, that is what will keep us together!

So, what do all these gifts have in common? What is the common denominator of **The grace of the Lord**

Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit? It is the unfathomableness that we have them given to us! It is quite simply beyond reason that we wretched sinners should be given these gifts!

They also share a different common bond. We know that we have them given to us. At the same time, they are all things that the world continues to strive for! Mankind likes to think that it can have all these things by sheer force of will. The problem is that if you don't have the very same Triune God giving them to you, you could never have them!

Man tries to achieve grace in a form. The problem is that when you try to get grace by yourself, then it's never grace. We could never achieve grace by anything we can accomplish on our own. The same is true with the love of God. Man likes to think that He can earn God's love by simply being outwardly righteous and morally good. But again we know from God's Word that is simply not possible! There is none righteous, no not one! The same is even true with fellowship. Man is constantly striving for outward peace and unity. But this too is not possible without God!

All of these gifts are not possible from the will of sinful men. Sin always gets in the way. The only way we can truly have these gifts that Paul describes is only through our HOLY and TRIUNE LORD! It is unfathomable that we dreadful sinners should have them. But we do, and they are all because of GOD!!!

As a preacher, something I always try to do in the course of the sermon is to make some kind of comparison. It helps people solidify Biblical teachings if they can take a concept found in Scripture and compare it to some aspect of their lives. There is a good president for doing this. After all, that is what the parables of Jesus were all about.

But when it comes to the teaching of the TRINITY, you really can't compare it to anything in this life because there is nothing close to it in this life. You no doubt have seen visual representations of this. Look at the banner behind me. That picture of the 3 circles intersecting is an attempt at this. Perhaps there are

some aspects that we can understand. But once you run them through the old reason processor, they fall apart. So there are 3 different and distinct persons in the LORD. But there are not 3 LORDs but 1 LORD. They are each distinct, yet equal. They always were 1, uncreated. Yet they always were 3. This math doesn't exactly add up to us. It's not $1+1+1=3$. It's more like $1=3$.

The concept of the Trinity doesn't make sense when you think about it. And, if you think about it, it is beautiful! At first, it is confusing to our flawed minds. But really it gets your headspace in the right place. Once you realize that you cannot reason it, you reason that the problem is with you and not with the LORD. God in all His intricacies is on another level than what I am able to understand. So, we let Him speak and by faith we let it stand at that.

When it comes to anything that we cannot fathom or reason, the question really isn't "how can this be?" We know ultimately from Jesus the answer to that. **"With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible."** (Mat 19:26 NKJ) No, the real question we need to answer is the question that curious minds everywhere get, "Why do you want to know?" Are we asking so it makes sense to us? What happens when it doesn't? Does this make us doubt our gracious and loving God or does it reinforce the truth that His ways are higher than ours? If it makes us doubt, then curiosity is killing the cat on a spiritual scale. We are that foolish cat in this scenario and the blame rests on the cat alone. If it reinforces God's greatness, then it is a work of God Himself and is another blessing that we don't deserve!

A lot of what God tells us does add up to our sense of reason. Instead of trying to square it away in your mind, take God for what He says and praise Him for it! You know what doesn't make sense? That we should have the grace of Jesus Christ instead of the wrath that we deserve for our sins! You know what doesn't make sense? That God would love us worthless sinners to the point that He would send His most beloved Son to this earth to pay for those sins! You know what doesn't make sense? That we should be united through the Holy Spirit and receive the joy and

blessing that is the fellowship of God and our fellow believers! Those gifts that God gives us don't make sense. And the LORD deserves our eternal praise for these gifts! All praise and thanks be to our eternal and triune God, who gives us unfathomable gifts! AMEN!!!