

I.N.I.

Trinity Sunday
June 11, 2017
II Corinthians 13:11-14

In Christ Jesus, who together with the Father and the Holy Spirit is One God, the Triune God,
Dear Fellow Redeemed,

One of the first bikes we probably learned to ride was a tricycle—a steady three-wheeled bike. A favorite game of many is the card game Uno---which word you shout out when you get down to one card. When you put the first syllable for that bike together with the card game you get Triune! Three-in-one!

This morning we are celebrating the Festival of the Triune God also called the Festival of the Holy Trinity. It is the last holiday of the Church Year. It is unique in the sense that the other holidays all celebrate an event while this holiday celebrates a doctrine, a teaching of the Bible. This holiday also comes at the end of the festival half of the Church Year for a very good purpose. As we close out this festival half of the Church Year we look back on our celebrations, our holidays, our special worship services and see what our Triune God has done for us.

And in a sense the Apostle Paul did the same thing when he closed his second letter to the congregation in Corinth. The Corinthian congregation had some of the very same problems that congregations face today. Solomon said it many years ago; **THERE IS NOTHING NEW UNDER THE SUN.**

Today we see members in churches who follow the preacher rather than the Word being preached. There are certain cliques within churches. The first love of many congregations has faded and the worldly lifestyle attacks us and affects our lives. There are some churches who, in the name of God, have declared that they have the right over their bodies at the expense of the unborn and declare that they have been created by God to express themselves sexually with members of the same sex and in God's name perform same sex weddings. We see congregations today who will not discipline their members when they have publicly sinned. Some of today's prominent religious leaders and teachers openly debate if not deny the bodily resurrection of Christ and elevate human wisdom, reason, and philosophy over the simple wisdom and truth of the Bible.

So Paul's closing words to the Corinthians are also very applicable words for each of us today as we celebrate the festival of the Holy Trinity.

The Apostle Paul lays upon our hearts what we call:

THE APOSTOLIC BLESSING!

I: LOVE FROM GOD THE FATHER

II: GRACE FROM GOD THE SON

III: FELLOWSHIP FROM GOD THE HOLY SPIRIT

Paul begins our section of study with a farewell. **FINALLY, BRETHREN, FAREWELL. BECOME COMPLETE. BE OF GOOD COMFORT...** Both of these statements are passive imperatives. That means they are requests to have something be done to you. It is like instead of someone saying "fix your hair," they say "have your hair fixed." Paul is not saying "**complete yourself**" and "**comfort yourself**," he is saying **BE COMPLETE** and **BE COMFORTED**. The question is **HOW?**

The answer: put into action what God has said through Paul in his letters. The word **complete** means to "be restored to your former condition," or "be equipped with all that you need to be complete." Intrinsic in this word is the thought of "being changed" so that one is restored to their proper condition.

Mankind was created perfect in God's image. But sin changed all of that. Sin corrupted everything---our bodies, our hearts, our minds. Our thoughts, words and actions were now not God pleasing but selfish, self-centered and sinful. Every child was conceived dead in sin, enemies of God, headed for hell, a child of Satan. We could do nothing that was good in God's sight because of our sins.

But the Gospel message of Christ crucified and risen again has restored us to the condition of

being God's children. We have been changed. We have been declared "not guilty." We now stand before God in righteousness and holiness through Jesus Christ. The image of God has been restored to us in part through faith in Christ. We are spiritually complete only through Jesus. With that same Good News of Jesus' perfect life, death and resurrection we find comfort in the forgiveness of all of our sins. This is something that God has done for us. He completes us in Christ. He comforts us in Christ.

Paul now follows up with two active imperatives. That means they are requests for us to do something. Like telling us "fix your hair." Paul writes, **BE OF ONE MIND, LIVE IN PEACE...** The Corinthian Christians are to be **OF ONE MIND**. They are to set their minds on the same thing. It means not only to be comforted, but to be comforters. It means to have such an affection and feeling of love and mercy toward others for their interest and welfare that we put aside our own interests, needs and concerns and serve others. This unity and harmony in a Christian congregation brings about peace with one another. A oneness between members without backbiting and gossiping; without anger or selfishness. Instead there will be a willingness to be "one in mind and heart" with each other as brothers and sisters in Christ.

This can only come about when **THE GOD OF LOVE AND PEACE** is with us. When the Lord's selfless, self-sacrificing love fills our hearts, when we have this peace with God in Christ, we will also be moved, compelled to live in unity and peace with each other. As such concerned members one to another, Paul says **GREET ONE ANOTHER WITH A HOLY KISS**.

In Paul's day this was a sign of true fellowship and love. Today we would probably say "greet one another with a big hug" to show your concern. As we leave church and greet each other, it should not be just a mere formality with a handshake, but a greeting of love and concern, peace and harmony. This is our expression of unity, harmony and love which we share in our Lord.

Paul now closes with what the church commonly calls the **APOSTOLIC BLESSING or BENEDICTION**. Most every Sunday we use the benediction that is found in the Old Testament in Numbers 6: **THE LORD BLESS YOU AND KEEP YOU, THE LORD MAKE HIS FACE SHINE UPON YOU AND BE GRACIOUS UNTO YOU, THE LORD LIFT UP HIS COUNTENANCE UPON YOU AND GIVE YOU PEACE**. This was the blessing that the LORD Jehovah laid upon the people through Aaron the High Priest and every High Priest after him to end their worship service. We call it that the **AARONIC BENEDICTION**.

The Lord through Paul now lays upon our hearts this New Testament blessing: **THE GRACE OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST, AND THE LOVE OF GOD, AND THE COMMUNION OF THE HOLY SPIRIT BE WITH YOU ALL. AMEN**.

THE LOVE OF GOD THE FATHER was proved in His eternal counsel when He planned the salvation of all of sinful mankind and this love was seen in His sending and sacrificing of His only begotten Son. This sacrifice reconciled the whole world to Himself. Through Jesus, God the Father made peace with rebellious mankind and He has accepted us as His own children through faith in Jesus. What tremendous **LOVE** God the Father has showered upon us.

THE GRACE OF THE LORD JESUS became evident in His incarnation--His coming to be born in human flesh; in His perfectly loving obedient life as our Substitute; in His sufferings and death for us on the cross; in His victorious resurrection and in His triumphant ascension on high where He now rules all things and serves as our Intercessor before the Father. What tremendous **GRACE--UNDESERVED LOVE** God the Son has showered upon us.

THE COMMUNION/FELLOWSHIP OF THE HOLY SPIRIT is that wonderful power that works through the Means of Grace; the Gospel in Word and Sacraments first to convict us of our sins and then to convert us to a living faith and trust in Jesus as our Lord and Savior. It is also this power of the Gospel that motivates us to live a sanctified life under the Lord's direction. This communion/fellowship is both with the individual Christian and the Holy Spirit as well as with each other as like-minded Christians. This is that fellowship of love and support we share with one another in our joys as well as in our sorrows, in our successes as well as in our failures, in our living as well as in our dying.

That common bond of the Holy Spirit living in us through the power of the Gospel of Jesus Christ is so very precious. The hymn writer put it so beautifully: **BLEST BE THE TIE THAT BINDS OUR HEARTS IN CHRISTIAN LOVE; THE FELLOWSHIP OF KINDRED MINDS IS**

LIKE TO THAT ABOVE. BEFORE OUR FATHER'S THRONE WE POUR OUR ARDENT PRAYERS; OUR FEARS, OUR HOPES, OUR AIMS ARE ONE, OUR COMFORTS AND OUR CARES. What tremendous **FELLOWSHIP** God the Holy Spirit has showered upon us.

As we look back upon this Church Year we see the activity of our Triune God and as we look back upon our many years here on this earth we can also see the blessed activity of the Triune God in our own individual lives as well as in the life of our congregation.

May the Holy Spirit, who has led us into this blessed fellowship, move us to go and tell others about the Triune God and about their Savior Jesus, so that the Holy Spirit can also work powerfully in their hearts, convert them and bring them into this family of believers, this fellowship of the children of God in Christ.

Amen.