

Text: 2 Corinthians 13:11-14. Trinity Sunday. **June 15, 2014.**

Grace and peace are yours through God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. Amen.

A while back I was at the dentist. I know, lots of fun. After my cleaning was over, I was waiting for the dentist to come in and my phone rang. Unknown number. I figured talking on the phone was better than talking to the dentist, so I answered it. The gentleman asked me, "I was looking at your website and wanted to know, 'Are you the Pastor at Good News Lutheran Church?'" That's our new church in Mt. Horeb. "Yes," I said. I was excited that someone saw our website and called me. Maybe he wants to start coming to church. "I have a biblical question," he said. Cool! I love biblical questions. "You say on your website that you believe that God is Father, Son and Holy Spirit." "That's right," I replied. "That's what the Bible says." He proceeded to tell me I was wrong, that there is only one God (which the Bible teaches.) and any time I would open my mouth to quote a Bible passage about Father, Son and Holy Spirit, he cut me off, wanted to argue some more, tell me only the Father is God (which the Bible doesn't teach). After ten minutes, I was glad the dentist came in and we had to end the conversation. I was happier to be at the dentist than talking about the Trinity.

Is that how you feel about the Trinity? That it's just a confusing teaching, it just starts arguments? The Trinity doesn't make any sense? How could this possibly be? The Athanasian Creed makes my head hurt and my mind spin and I'm more confused after hearing it than I was before. I'd rather be at the dentist than talking about the Trinity! I can sympathize. But let me tell you this. I have met many people who had questions about the Trinity, real, serious questions. God's Word has answered those questions. When I have had the chance to sit down and study the Bible with them, when we've had the chance to step back and see what the Bible says about God's great grace and love, when someone has approached this teaching with humble faith, not with reason and arguments, those questions melt away in God's love. If we try to take the teaching of the Trinity on its own, apart from all other teachings, with an attitude that, "This teaching has to make sense or I won't believe it!" it will never make sense and you won't believe it. But when you first see, "God is a God of love. Everything God tells me he tells me because he loves me. I'll believe this because God says it," then the Trinity won't make any more sense, but through faith it will be one more way to experience God's grace and love and have a close relationship with him. It really boils down to this question, "What kind of God do we have?" God's grace and love really don't make any more sense than the Trinity. So just as we believe God's grace and love, we will believe the Trinity.

What kind of God do we have? We have a God that brings the closest relationships to us. That was especially amazing for the Corinthians. This section begins with the word, "Finally." These are the final words to a church with a lot of troubles. Christians were taking each other to court and suing each other. Some were drinking so much at communion, they were getting drunk. A man was sleeping with his father's wife, his own stepmother. And they were proud about that! But probably their most pervasive problem, the first one mentioned in first Corinthians, was divisions. People followed people instead of following Jesus. Some said, "I follow Paul." Others said, "I follow Peter!" Others said, "I follow Apollos," a prominent member there. Others said, perhaps with smugness, "I only follow Jesus." What kind of God do we have? A God who healed these divisions, a God greater than these divisions, a God who called all these people brothers and sisters. Brothers and sisters. People with the closest human relationship possible. People with a relationship based on Jesus.

I think it's so cool to call each other brothers and sisters. I came here less than four years ago and didn't know anyone here. It didn't take long for me to be welcomed. Thank you. Look around. How many of you knew each other before coming to this congregation? Not many were family. Not many friends. But now many of you are close friends, as close or closer than brothers and sisters. That's the kind of God we have. A common connection of faith forges the closest friendships.

We rejoice together! We strive for full restoration. Think of what a great change that was for the divided Corinthians. But God's Word brings that full restoration. It happens when people get together. Some are outgoing. Some are quiet. Some get along great. Some not so much. Sometimes time together or too much time together can rub us the wrong way. This word restoration was used for repairing fishing nets. Over time, the nets fray, they rub, they start to come apart. When that starts to happen with our relationships, God brings restoration, full restoration.

We encourage one another. It's tough to be a Christian in this world. It's not just argumentative phone calls while at the dentist. People are denying the most basic teachings of the Bible. Sin is a four letter word you can't say, while four letter words you can say. Someone who stands up for the Bible in the most kind and respectful way is called a hater, narrow-minded or worse. God gives us the strength to encourage one another. Just your presence today encourages and reminds us all, "We are not alone. We are following the same great God."

What kind of God do we have? A God of peace. That's a cool word. A God who gives us one mind. Now please don't think of this like an insult, "They are sharing a brain." Think of this as a compliment. Great minds run on the same track. When you think the way God

thinks, you start to think alike. When you are following a common goal, setting your mind on God's things, your minds start to line up. This is really cool and a blessing we really enjoy. To have the same mindset, to be of one mind, to think alike. It's cool to hear comments in Bible class from people who get it, people who are thinking like God. It's really awesome to study the Bible with people and hear them say, "I used to never get the Trinity and I still don't get it. But now I believe it. Thanks for teaching me." That's the kind of God we have, a God who gives us courage and peace to be of one mind.

We can show this even in how we greet each other. Maybe we don't use a holy kiss anymore. Kiss has too much of a physical or even sexual connotation. But a kiss common in other parts of the world today, parts not too far away. I spent some time in Mexico. I was introduced to a young lady. Her natural reaction was to lean forward and kiss each cheek. I backed away, "Hey! I'm married." But that's what people did. And when I saw it take place at church, it was really cool. Here were people who loved each other. Here are people who looked forward to being together. Maybe we won't restore the holy kiss, maybe we should. But I'm confident that all these things our God gives can and will be ours: rejoicing, restoration, encouragement, one mind, peace, love, wonderful greetings.

But it's hard to hang on to those wonderful blessings. When the church budget is tight, different ideas of what to do fray the cords of love. When someone dares to talk about money, we close our ears as though our God cares nothing about the money he gives us. What about the Trinity? Ever doubted? Ever argued? Ever just wanted to ignore a part of God's Word and throw up your hands and say, "It doesn't make sense to me. I'm not going to believe it. I'll just go back to the dentist. At least he has pictures and proof of my teeth."

But if we ignore what God says about himself, look at what we will miss. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. Grace is undeserved love. That's more than a Catechism definition. That's a basis for your life definition. We deserved hell. Jesus gave us heaven. We deserved God's anger. Jesus gave us God's love. Earlier in 2 Corinthians God said, "You know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that you, through his poverty, might become rich." We are rich in love, rich in forgiveness, rich in grace. What kind of God do we have? A God of grace.

A God of love, the love of God be with you all. This isn't pizza love, that's here today and gone tomorrow. The love of God is a love that is totally focused on the other. God didn't consider what he got out of loving us. He only asked what we will get out of it. God's love didn't ask what we deserved. God asked, "What do they need? They need a Savior. I'll send Jesus. They need forgiveness. I'll take away their sins. They need holiness to see me. I'll give them Jesus' holiness. They need other believers to encourage them in their time on earth. I will give them the Church to help them and walk with them." God's love only cared about what we needed. And God gave us exactly that. That's the kind of God we have.

A God who gives us fellowship with the Holy Spirit. This word fellowship talks about a close, intimate relationship. Ask anyone and they will tell you that good relationships are based on communication, right? How does the Holy Spirit communicate with us? Through God's Word! Want to have fellowship with the Holy Spirit, read God's Word, listen to God's Word. Inwardly digest God's Word. Make God's Word your daily companion in life then the Holy Spirit will be your daily companion in life. What kind of God do we have? A God of grace, of love, a God who wants to have fellowship with us.

You see, when we start there with God, grace, love, fellowship, the rest of the questions about what kind of God we have really seem secondary. Maybe I don't understand the Trinity. I don't. Maybe I can't explain the Trinity rationally. I can't. No one ever has. But that's ok. I have a God of love and grace. I don't understand why God would love a sinner like me. I can't understand how there can be one God who is three persons. That's ok. I'll just believe it and let God figure out the details. I'll just say with a wise Christian who came before me. "He who does not want to believe Scripture but runs after reason, let him run... I believe God more than my own thoughts and reason and do not worry about how it can be that God is one God and at the same time Father, Son and Holy Spirit... This is God's Word, do not be frightened. God will not lie." What kind of God do we have? A God of truth, of love and grace. That's what I really need to understand. Amen.