

Almighty Creator and ever-living God: we worship your glory, eternal Three-in-One, and we praise your power, majestic One-in-Three. Keep us steadfast in this faith, defend us in all adversity, and bring us at last into your presence, where you live in endless joy and love, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

Second Reading: Romans 5:1-5

¹ Therefore, since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, ² through whom we have obtained access to this grace in which we stand, and we boast in our hope of sharing the glory of God. ³ And not only that, but we also boast in our afflictions, knowing that affliction produces endurance, ⁴ and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, ⁵ and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us.

Gospel: John 16:12-15

[Jesus said,] ¹² "I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. ¹³ When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own but will speak whatever he hears, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. ¹⁴ He will glorify me because he will take what is mine and declare it to you. ¹⁵ All that the Father has is mine. For this reason I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you."

Well it's Holy Trinity Sunday, so I'll share the line my Systematic Theology professor told us about today, “You have to be either really smart or really stupid to preach on the Holy Trinity.” That statement used to always make me nervous about preaching this Sunday, and I'm pretty sure for the first few years into our shared pastorate, I always asked my husband to take this Sunday. However, I came to a realization the other day when I knew I would be preaching this Sunday. I preach on the Holy Trinity almost every Sunday! God as the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit regularly make appearances in our lessons for Sunday. That's not a big surprise, so I realized that perhaps the better thought about this Sunday is that you have to be either really smart or really stupid to try to *explain* the Holy Trinity. I am neither, so instead, let's live into the Holy Trinity today.

Paul really gives us a good insight into the relationship of the Holy Trinity within God and with us. And he gives us a good challenge as to our relationship with this life and with God the Three-in-One. First, the challenge. Ever boast in your suffering? He's not talking about the one-up-manship we sometimes play with one another about who has life worse, or the recounting of all the things that have gone wrong and feeling like we deserve a medal, he is actually speaking about seeing all the wrong in our lives and in the world as an opportunity to become stronger in God and let the Holy Spirit work through you to bring hope into this world. Paul challenges the idea of asking “why is this happening to me” and instead proclaiming, “this is happening to me, but I have hope to get through it.” A question turned into an answer-words hopefully turned into actions.

I don't like that about Paul. There are quite a few things I struggle with about Paul, but in this instance what I don't like about Paul is that he knows where people's weak spots are, and he won't let them dwell on them or use them for excuses. We are justified by faith-we as Lutherans are especially big on that statement. We recognize that we don't have to earn our salvation-we are not bound by law to earn God's favor or grace. That's awesome, but it also means that we do what we do, both good and bad, because it's who we choose to be. Especially here in our mostly middle class, white world, we live in comfort because we can and we want to, and when we don't engage in issues of justice, race, equality, poverty, foreign policy, corruption, and all the other inhumanities that take place in this world, it is because we can, we can for the most part ignore them if we choose. And if we choose, then where is the hope for those truly suffering, barely enduring, whose character is questioned based on traits they were born with? And who are we, if we can see the suffering of others in this world, and not proclaim the love of God and the hope for change into the midst of it? What are we boasting in, if it is not our role in stopping suffering, spreading the love of God and the mission of God to the world? Paul is not calling for us as Christians to wallow in a "Woe is me" mentality, but instead to acknowledge that there is pain and brokenness in this world, then use our relationship with God in the Trinity to give us the strength and character and hope to endure and help others.

I read this quote this week about the Holy Trinity, and I think it helps to sum up all the lessons we are hearing today. It is by Meister Eckhart, a German theologian who

lived in the 12 and 1300s. He wrote, "Do you want to know what goes on in the heart of the Trinity? I will tell you. In the heart of the Trinity the Father laughs and gives birth to the Son. The Son laughs back at the Father and gives birth to the Spirit. The whole Trinity laughs and gives birth to us." A *German* theologian wrote that over 700 years ago. He must have fallen into the really smart category because this is an image I cannot get out my head. I always picture the Father and Jesus as so serious, and I hardly picture the Spirit at all, but here we have an image of God loving so much, loving a child, loving a parent, loving wisdom and truth so much, humanity is created in the resulting love and joy. We are the overflow of the Trinity-love that was too much it could no longer be contained within God, so it spilled over into us.

That is what Paul also tells us this morning, "love has been poured into our hearts", and Jesus promises us "the Spirit will take what is mine and declare it to you". We don't have to understand the Trinity, we don't have to explain the Trinity (thank goodness), we don't have to draw a diagram for how one God can be three persons and yet one God, all we have to do is be loved, rejoice in God's grace and glory being poured out upon us, and help others to bask in it as well. God knows who God is. God understands the relationship between Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and God knows it is fully beyond our understanding. But God also knows we need God, in all parts, and in as many ways as we can receive him. We call on the Trinity throughout our worship so that we can experience God as parent, sibling, Savior, Spirit, breath, hope, human and divine, and every way possible because God gives us all of himself, herself, themselves,

allselfes, all ways, and any ways. Love is being poured down upon us, and the love of the Trinity is better than any explanation anyone could ever give us. Amen.

Drawn into the embrace of the holy Trinity, we lift our prayers for the wholeness of the church, the world, and all creation.

Abiding God, your love pours into your whole church, creating faith and bestowing hope. Fill all the baptized with these good gifts in our various callings. Gather your church in every place and expression into the unity of your Spirit. God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

Creating God, your name is majestic in all the earth, and we are filled with awe at your creation. Renew this planet and all its wonders: springs abounding with water, earth and soil, beasts of the field, birds of the air, and fish of the sea. God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

Sovereign God, you delight in the whole human race. On this week of Juneteenth, bring an end to racial oppression and heal the wounds of racial trauma. Grant us your wisdom, so that all people, especially those in authority, work for the life and freedom of others. God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

Compassionate God, your mindful care for us is everlasting. Give peace to all who are troubled, endurance to all who suffer, deliverance to all who are afflicted, and healing to all who are sick. God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

Living God, your glory appears in our shared life. On this Father's Day, give to all fathers and father figures gentle hearts and strong spirits, heal the wounds in our families, and comfort those for whom this day brings pain. God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

Eternal God, your hope does not disappoint. We give you thanks for all who have died in the hope of the resurrection (*especially the Emanuel Nine, martyrs*). Hold us in our grief, and bring us at last to fullness of life in you. God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

Gather all our prayers in your mercy, O God, through Jesus Christ, our Savior. **Amen.**

The love of God abound in you; the grace of our Savior Jesus Christ fill your hearts; and the life of the Spirit bless you and give you peace. **Amen.**