

John 16:12-15 (NIV)

<sup>12</sup>“I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear. <sup>13</sup>But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all the truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. <sup>14</sup>He will glorify me because it is from me that he will receive what he will make known to you. <sup>15</sup>All that belongs to the Father is mine. That is why I said the Spirit will receive from me what he will make known to you.”

Romans 5:1-5 (NIV)

Therefore, since we have been justified through **faith**, we have **peace** with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, <sup>2</sup>through whom we have gained access by faith into this **grace** in which we now stand. And we boast in the **hope** of the glory of God. <sup>3</sup>Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; <sup>4</sup>perseverance, character; and character, **hope**. <sup>5</sup>And hope does not put us to shame, because God’s **love** has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us.

[PRAY]

Today is Trinity Sunday...

When one of our sons was about ten years old, he announced that he did not believe in God because “You can’t see God!” I told him of course, that he was correct.

But then I asked him: “Are you breathing?”

I received the appropriate eye-roll and response: “Duh, yeah!”

“How do you know?? You can’t see air can you?” “How can you believe in air if you can’t see it?”

“I know because I know!”

“Can you feel the wind on your face? “Duh, yeah!”

“Do you believe in the wind/air, because you cannot see it?!”

Well, needless to say it was an interesting conversation.

Do you believe in love, even when you cannot “see” it?

I believe in the Holy Spirit, and in love because I can see the effects of both!

Last Sunday was Pentecost Sunday, the “birthday of the church”, and when the Spirit comes upon the believers. Today and every Sunday we acknowledge the Trinity. (There is a good explanation provided in the bulletin today.)

We believe that God is One God, expressed in three distinct personalities: God the Father--God the Son-- God the Holy Spirit.

We acknowledge the limitations of language in which our personal pronouns also convey or assign maleness or femaleness to God, when we would acknowledge that God’s self transcends sexuality. The Bible teaches that both men and women are created in the image of God! The point? While we believe God is transcendent...and infinite, we also believe God is “personal”.

God as parent has been traditionally called “father”, and when God took on human flesh and entered human history, God took up residence in a human male, known to us as the Son, Jesus Christ. In human form, Jesus communicated God’s love through his ministry of healing, preaching, and teaching. Jesus expressed God’s redeeming love in self-sacrifice, through his death and resurrection.

In human form Jesus was confined, as we are, to being in one location at any given time. But Jesus promised to send the Holy Spirit to indwell believers, and in this way God can be everywhere people of faith are!

The Holy Trinity existed before creation, and was active in creation. They are, if you will, a family of mutual love and grace in perfect harmonious, relationships with one another; a picture of community at its best! As such, God does not “need” us. But, I daresay, we need them! And, love is meant to be shared and given away!

There are various “explanations” that help us wrap our minds around the meaning of the Trinity, yet I believe they all fall short.

For instance, water has three forms: solid, as when frozen, liquid, and vapor, as in steam. All are equally H<sub>2</sub>O. While we believe that God has three forms or personalities, this example fails to convey what is essential to the Trinity: Relationship. Three who are of the same essence (like H<sub>2</sub>O) but uniquely different in role and function and relationship!

So...how many of you enjoy a good mystery?? I'm glad, because there is an aspect of our faith that dwells in mystery, and that in part, is what the Holy Trinity represents. ***"Mystery does not mean something you cannot understand. Mystery means something you can endlessly understand, you can never say, "I got it", there is always more, there is always more!"*** (Richard Rohr)

"Father, Son, and Holy Spirit mean that the mystery *beyond* us, the mystery *among* us, and the mystery *within* us, *are all the same* mystery. Thus the Trinity is a way of saying something about us and how we experience God." (Frederick Buechner, p. 93)

Rather than try to explain this Truth that we believe, let's consider these passages which tell us about the role/function/relationship of the Father/Son and Holy Spirit in our lives.

Jesus tells his disciples that they cannot bear all that he has to tell them so close to his crucifixion. Jesus makes them a promise which is later fulfilled on Pentecost: He sends the Holy Spirit who will be their helper, companion, truth-teller. The Spirit will convey truth to disciples that is consistent with God's previous messages, communicated by Jesus himself. ***"All that belongs to the Father is mine. That is why I said the Spirit will receive from me, what he will make known to you."***

The Trinity, while three distinct persons, **all share a single-mindedness**. One will not contradict the other, because there is **integrity** in the truth of their unity or oneness, in who they are and how and what they communicate.

This reminds me of occasions when our sons were younger. (I'm sure this is a common phenomenon!) If they wanted something, often if they didn't like the response from one parent, what would they do? Of course, they'd ask the other one in hopes that one would agree with them! They'd "play both sides against the middle".

We might be tempted to try this with God, but I can assure you that it would be a lost cause. God—Father/Son/Holy Spirit—are all on the same page. They have integrity. They will not be divided, they are unified, they are One.

In the space of five verses of Romans 5, Paul mentions God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit.

We have peace with God (v.1) **This peace, plus grace** come to us through **Jesus Christ** (v.2). Furthermore, **God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit (verse 5)**. **Jesus, the Son, gives us access to God's glory and all the benefits of adoption as God's children.**

In the previous 4 chapters, Paul has described the depths of sin which has so thoroughly affected all our relationships and has separated us from God.

The Good News is that **we can experience peace with God/shalom** – now and forever- **as a result of our justification.**

**Justification is a big word, a theological word, a legal word originating in the courtroom.** Legally, it is an act of a judge pronouncing the opposite sentence to condemnation, that of acquittal and legal immunity.

When printing presses were in common use, the process of “justification” involved lining up or setting the actual type in a way that the words were evenly spaced, and in “right relationship” to the margins, when printed. Today, word processing programs have the same capacity.

**Theologically, “to justify” means to make our relationship with God, “right”, by freeing us from blame/guilt/sin through forgiveness. Through Jesus’ actions on our behalf, we are justified or made right with God through faith, which has at least three outcomes:**

**1—We have Peace with God.**—Shalom—so much more than absence of conflict! It means “wholeness” or “the dynamic, vibrating health of an individual and society that pulses with divinely directed purpose and surges with life-transforming love”. (Eugene Peterson, P. 152, They Run With Horses)

**2—We have access by faith in the grace in which we stand.**

If you are familiar with the Wizard of Oz, you know that the protagonist is a young girl named Dorothy. Due to a nasty head injury inflicted during a tornado in her Kansas home, Dorothy has a dream which involves all kinds of crazy adventures in the strange land of Oz. During her efforts to return home to Kansas, Dorothy encounters dangers and acquires three unusual companions: a cowardly lion, a heart-less tin man, and a brain-less scarecrow. Each of them are seeking what

they lack, and are assured by everyone they meet that the great and glorious Wizard will be able to give each of them exactly what they need.

**The problem? Access.** They have no access. Initially, they cannot get into the Emerald City, let alone gain an audience with the Great and Mighty Oz! Eventually they do, and they discover (spoiler alert!!) the Great and Mighty Wizard is really just an ordinary man, projecting power from a place of weakness, hiding behind a curtain!

**The Good News is that the cross of Christ became a bridge across the chasm created by sin, so that we now have direct access to God!** We have access to One, who unlike the impotent Wizard, [God] has the power to justify and forgive us, and provide exactly what we lack!

In the Greek, the word for “access” (prosagoge) carries the solemn sense of being granted an audience with a monarch or afforded unhindered access into God’s presence! Before Christ, only the High Priest had access to the Holy of Holies, and that, only one day a year! Now each one of us has access to God, all the time, any place!

Not only do we have access, but our position before Almighty God is one of **“standing in grace.”** Unlike the characters seeking help from the Wizard, we need not grovel, beg, or even kneel, but –because of Christ—We stand in Grace. In other words, through Christ’ effort to justify us, places us in right relationship with God through redemption on the cross, **the image of God has been restored in us, so we can stand before God, fearless because we stand in Grace!**

**The verb tense for “stand” [present perfect] “carries the sense of something firm and lasting, the opposite of a short-term, fair-weather relationship with God. To stand in Grace is to possess a footing and anchor from God which is able to withstand all opposition to the life of faith.” (J. Edwards, p. 135)**

**Furthermore,**

**3—We now have hope—yes, even in the midst of suffering, because God’s Love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit.**

God is many things, but God is NOT stingy. God is not miserly when it comes to loving you and me. And this unconditional love of God is NOT an abstraction. It is made concrete in the person and sacrifice of Christ on the cross. God lavishes

love upon us... such that NOTHING can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Try and think of something...can death nor life? Angels or demons?  
The present nor the future, nor any powers, nor anything else in all creation?

***Nothing*<sup>38....</sup> will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”** (Romans 8:38-39)

That love is God’s gift to us  
expressed on the Cross in Christ  
and poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit!  
Indeed today as we celebrate these the gifts of the Holy Trinity—of One God in three persons, we realize that our faith in mystery.  
This mystery is a reality! As long as we live, may we grow ever deeper in our understanding of who this God is, Father—Son—and Holy Spirit—  
the One to whom we have direct access,  
the One in whose Grace we stand,  
the One whom we worship and serve.  
Thanks be to God!

Let us pray...