

Emmanuel Ev. Lutheran Church—Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod  
Pentecost 1 / Holy Trinity  
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Sermon by Pastor Gary A. Pufahl  
**Blessings from our Triune God**

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. <sup>12</sup> Greet one another with a holy kiss. <sup>13</sup> All the saints greet you. <sup>14</sup> The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

—2 Corinthians 13:11-14

In a few minutes we will confess the Athanasian Creed together. And you will notice that we will carefully proclaim the truth about the Triune God, but we will not explain this teaching. The fact that there is one true God, but he reveals himself as three distinct persons, does not make sense to us. The magnitude of God is way bigger than our limited, finite minds.

So, we are not here today to explain the teaching of the Triune God. We can't. We are not here today to understand the teaching of the Trinity. We can't. But we are here today to proclaim that truth. And we are here today to believe that truth.

So, we proclaim this truth out loud: **God is triune**. We can't understand the depth and width of our Triune God. We can't understand how he is one God in three persons and three persons in one God. We can't understand that, but we say it out loud. We proclaim that truth because that's who God is. And he reveals himself to us because he wants to bless us and save us.

To help us see the marvels of what God does for us, we listen to the apostle Paul today. He's writing a series of letters to Christians who were living in the city of Corinth.

Now I'd just like to remind you of some things that were happening in Corinth. The congregation had a lot of problems. They were self-centered. They didn't think about other people. They were hauling each other off to court to get justice. And instead of giving their offerings to support mission work, they kept all their money for themselves.

Not only that, the culture of Corinth began seeping into the congregation. I don't know if you have ever heard of the term, "Corinthianize" or not, but that term was used to refer to people who lived a very promiscuous life of drunkenness and gross immorality. And guess what! The Christians in the Corinthian church were doing it all too. They thought, "This is my body. This is my life. I should be able to do whatever I want to do." And they did.

The leaders of the church were turning a deaf ear to some spiritual problems that existed in the congregation. In fact, they were boasting of the sinful relationship of a man and his stepmom. The situation in Corinth was bad.

Just read through Paul's letters to the Corinthians. You would look at the congregation and say, "What is going on? That congregation is a mess. Why would God want anything to do with those people?"

Ah. But wait. How much better is our congregation? How much more pious are you in your life? How much more am I? Before we judge the lives of others, we always want to check our own lives. Do you ever get drunk? Do you ever lust over someone you shouldn't? Do you ever think that you are better than your fellow believers? Do you wish things would be done your way? Do you look for people to serve you rather than you serve others? Do you always give your first and best to the Lord? Or do you squander your wealth on meaningless things?

Teens, you're not exempt from this. It might only be a part-time job, but God is blessing you with those wages. How do you glorify God with them?

It might be easy for us to look down on the Corinthians and think of ourselves as more superior. But when we search our lives, we know we are just as guilty and just as sinful.

And what should God do with us? Does he come to us and say, "I'm done with you. I am so frustrated with your lack of spiritual zeal. I'm sick of your lack-luster approach to things that really matter. Be gone!" Does our God simply let us go? Does he cut the ties with us and let us sink into the mire and the depths of hell, apart from him forever?

No. A thousand times – no. It's so amazing. Even after giving a long laundry list of crimes of which the Corinthian congregation was guilty, Paul ends his letters to the Corinthians with these last words: "**The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.**"

Wow! Isn't that remarkable? Those words are familiar to you. We say those words a lot here, but they aren't some pious wish, "Oh, I really hope this happens to you." No, this is God's promise. This will happen to you.

This is a **blessing from our Triune God**. To bless something means that you will go out of your way in order to benefit someone else. It's action for the sake of someone else.

That's what our Triune God does for us. He blesses us. And where does it all start? **"The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ."**

Grace! You think about the grace that Jesus gave to the Corinthian congregation. When sin raised its ugly head in the Corinthian congregation and caused all sorts of problems, God should have eliminated them from his family. Paul should have sent a letter and said, "God has written you off." But he didn't. Rather he wrote in 2 Corinthians 8:9, **"For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that although he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that through his poverty you might become rich."** That's grace! God's Riches At Christ's Expense.

And my dear fellow family members in this church, when we sin, whenever we sin, when we forget to pray, when we neglect worship or dishonor people in authority or hold back generous gifts to God, or treat each other in unloving ways, God has a perfect right to come flashing out of the clouds with his mighty foot and squish us like filthy bugs. But he doesn't. He still says, "I am going to love you because I have smashed my Son Jesus instead of you." Every moment of every day we can be sure that God smiles on us because Jesus has absorbed God's anger. He took the hit so we wouldn't. That's grace! God's Riches At Christ's Expense.

I don't deserve it. You don't deserve it. But God gives it. He freely gives his grace. It is a tremendous blessing that Jesus pours into your life.

I can't understand the teaching of the Triune God, but I'm thankful for what he does. **"The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ ... be with you all."**

But our Triune God gives us more blessings. **"The love of God ... be with you all."** This is that agape love we have come to know from the God's Word. This is a love that goes into action for the best interest of others. Certainly the greatest picture of that love is what God does for you at the cross, but his love extends throughout every aspect of your life.

We confess in the Apostles' Creed, **"I believe in God the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth."** And in Luther's explanation to that, we get personal. **"I believe that God created me and all that exists, and that he gave me my body and soul, eyes, ears, and all my members, my mind and all my abilities."**

Just think about how God abundantly blessed the Corinthian congregation. That congregation was so talented. They had gifts oozing all over the place. God had richly blessed them with so many gifts.

But aren't you the same? Maybe even more so? We live in one of the most abundant countries in the world. We have so many advantages and resources that are given at our disposal. Look at the talents you have been given. Oh, you have so many talents. I'm amazed at the depth of gifts God has given to you.

Look at the place where we worship. You can actually hear the Word of God and join in praising his name.

Look at the friends he has given you. People who rally around you and care about you.

Look at the opportunities he gives us to reach out to others with his love at this time in history and in this place.

I don't fully understand the teaching of the Trinity, but I sure see evidence of God's love poured out in our lives. **"The love of God ... be with you."**

But here's another blessing from the Triune God: **"The fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all."**

Do you know what disunity is? Have you ever experienced it? If you have ever had a verbal dispute with someone, you know it. There are tensions. There is division. There are hurt feelings. People don't just get a divorce because one day they wake up and say, "Oh, I don't want to be married anymore." No. The disunity comes because of an eroding of oneness.

So what a tremendous blessing we receive from our Triune God! Unity! The gift of Jesus' grace and God's love become ours personally because the Holy Spirit lets us share in them and lets us share them with each other. To have unity means you have peace.

That's why Paul urged the Corinthians, **"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."** Paul even encouraged them to make use of the common public expression of unity, **"Greet one another with a holy kiss."** Maybe you and I won't do that as we greet each other after worship. That might be a little weird. But maybe that looks like a hug or handshake today.

What a blessing it is for us to enjoy fellowship from the Holy Spirit! He puts us in touch with God's grace and love so we can take to heart the message of forgiveness and know that we have peace with God.

But he also puts us in touch with one another. And there can come times in a congregation's history when that unity and oneness and fellowship mean so much. It's such a blessing from God to know that we express that fellowship with one another. God has blessed us with unity on the basis of his Word. We work together in order to bring this precious truth to people in our community and world.

How will we do it? We need the fellowship of the Holy Spirit. We need the Holy Spirit to draw us together into one family with one mindset as the family of God.

I don't fully understand the teaching of the Trinity, but I'm thankful for the blessings of fellowship with God and each other. **"The fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all."**

I can't fully understand the teaching of the Triune God, that there's only one God who is three distinct persons. But I'm thankful for why he has revealed himself to us. Our Triune God wants to bless us! Despite our consistent failings to live as children of God, he keeps pouring his grace into our lives. His love is seen every day with tremendous gifts not only for our souls but also for our bodies, gifts for our entire lives. And we are not disconnected from him. He has given us a faith that believes that we have peace with God now and for eternity. My friends, enjoy the blessings from your Triune God. Amen.