

Text: 2 Corinthians 13:11-14

"Finally, brothers, good-by. Aim for perfection, listen to my appeal, be of one mind, live in peace. And the God of love and peace will be with you. 12 Greet one another with a holy kiss. 13 All the saints send their greetings. 14 May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all."

Today we celebrate the Festival of the Holy Trinity, the Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit -- the distinguishing characteristic of the God we worship. We also commemorate the festival and the Biblical teaching from which our congregation has taken its name. We worship a God who says that He is three, yet He is one. We worship a God who is as simple as the faith of a little child and as complex as an equation that says $3 = 1$, which cannot be explained by even the most learned mathematician.

Maybe you don't lie awake at night concerned about understanding the Holy Trinity. If you don't, that's good because understanding the Trinity is not the key. It is, however, important to know what Scripture teaches and what we profess to believe about our Triune God. This lesson for today from 2 Corinthians helps us to learn about the Trinity. And many years ago, our Spiritual ancestors wrote down three creeds that help us remember and confess the Bible truth of our Triune God. Normally, on a non-communion Sunday we would use one of those creeds, the Apostles' Creed, to confess our faith. This morning, however, I would like to incorporate a long-standing tradition of Christianity for Trinity Sunday into my sermon. For well over 1000 years the church has used the third and longest of the universal creeds to confess our faith on Trinity Sunday. Today as we study St. Paul's words at the end of his second letter to the Corinthians and as we observe the Festival of the Trinity, let's use that Athanasian Creed to better see:

Our Triune God Gives Unity

- 1. Through peace with God.**
- 2. Through peace with each other.**

*Please turn to the Athanasian Creed on page 132 in the front of **Christian Worship**. (If you have a copy of the sermon manuscript, it is printed there.)*

1. Through peace with God.

First of all, there is a small amount of historical background on the Athanasian Creed.

The very first paragraph of the creed makes it very clear that to a Believer, a Christian, there is no room for debate in what we believe. Please read with me the opening paragraph of the Athanasian Creed.

Whoever wishes to be saved must, above all else, hold to the true Christian faith. Whoever does not keep this faith pure in all points will certainly perish forever.

There is one Christian faith, and all true Christians adhere to it. Simple enough. The creed is talking about UNITY.

St. Paul was urging the same unity when he wrote again to the Corinthians congregation. He was their pastor, their founder, their mentor. He was the one who had taken them to the woodshed in his first letter concerning problems in their church. And as he wrote this second letter, he stressed UNITY. Unity of the believer with God and unity among believers with each other. *"Finally, brothers, good-by. Aim for perfection, listen to my appeal, be of one mind, live in peace. And the God of love and peace will be with you."*

That unity is based on a common faith and that faith is outlined for us in the first main section of the Athanasian Creed. Please join me in reading the first article of the Athanasian Creed.

Now this is the true Christian faith: We worship one God in three persons and three persons in one God, without mixing the persons or dividing the divine being. For each person—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit—is distinct, but the deity of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is one, equal in glory and coeternal in

majesty. What the Father is, so is the Son, and so is the Holy Spirit. The Father is uncreated, the Son uncreated, the Holy Spirit uncreated; the Father is infinite, the Son infinite, the Holy Spirit infinite; the Father is eternal, the Son eternal, the Holy Spirit eternal; yet they are not three who are eternal, but there is one who is eternal, just as they are not three who are uncreated, nor three who are infinite, but there is one who is uncreated and one who is infinite. In the same way the Father is almighty, the Son is almighty, and the Holy Spirit is almighty; yet they are not three who are almighty, but there is one who is almighty. So the Father is God, the Son is God, the Holy Spirit is God; yet they are not three Gods, but one God. So the Father is Lord, the Son is Lord, the Holy Spirit is Lord; yet they are not three Lords, but one Lord. For just as Christian truth compels us to confess each person individually to be God and Lord, so the true Christian faith forbids us to speak of three Gods or three Lords. The Father is neither made nor created nor begotten of anyone. The Son is neither made nor created, but is begotten of the Father alone. The Holy Spirit is neither made nor created nor begotten, but proceeds from the Father and the Son. So there is one Father, not three Fathers; one Son, not three Sons; one Holy Spirit, not three Holy Spirits. And within this Trinity none comes before or after; none is greater or inferior, but all three persons are coequal and coeternal, so that in every way, as stated before, all three persons are to be worshiped as one God and one God worshiped as three persons. Whoever wishes to be saved must have this conviction of the Trinity.

That very God and Father whom we confess sent His Son Jesus into the world to create peace between us and Him. God created a perfect world. But soon after that declaration of “very good,” the world erupted into a war that would make the current wars in the Middle East look like a minor domestic dispute. After Adam and Eve had fallen into sin, God pronounced His saving plan. And that plan would be fulfilled in Jesus.

The second article of the Athanasian Creed, like the Apostles and Nicene Creed, confess our faith in our Lord Jesus Christ and his mission of restoring unity between God and men. Please join me in reading the second article of the Athanasian Creed.

It is furthermore necessary for eternal salvation truly to believe that our Lord Jesus Christ also took on human flesh. Now this is the true Christian faith: We believe and confess that our Lord Jesus Christ, God's Son, is both God and man. He is God, eternally begotten from the nature of the Father, and he is man, born in time from the nature of his mother, fully God, fully man, with rational soul and human flesh, equal to the Father as to his deity, less than the Father as to his humanity; and though he is both God and Man, Christ is not two persons but one, one, not by changing the deity into flesh, but by taking the humanity into God; one, indeed, not by mixture of the natures, but by unity in one person; for just as the rational soul and flesh are one human being, so God and man are one Christ. He suffered for our salvation, descended into hell, rose the third day from the dead. He ascended into heaven, is seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty, and from there he will come to judge the living and the dead. At his coming all people will rise with their own bodies to answer for their personal deeds. Those who have done good will enter eternal life, but those who have done evil will go into eternal fire.

This is the true Christian faith. Whoever does not faithfully and firmly believe this cannot be saved.

God’s saving plan has established peace and unity between us and Him. It is a unity that is found only in Jesus. It’s a unity that will last forever. And it’s a unity that will profoundly affect our relationships with each other.

2. Through peace with each other.

There is a popular sign that you may have seen. It says simply, “**No Jesus -- No Peace.**” I think that each of us can understand that. But the second line really says it all. “**Know Jesus -- Know peace.**” In Jesus, we find not only peace with our God but peace and UNITY with each other.

Paul celebrates that more human Unity between him and the Corinthians and again between the Corinthians themselves. “*12 Greet one another with a holy kiss. 13 All the saints send their greetings. 14 May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and*

the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all." He's talking about peace, harmony, brotherly love, getting along, and all of those other characteristics that people look for in general and that people look for in Christians. He's talking about what we call Christian Unity.

We love to sing a hymn about our unity that says, "**Blest be the tie that binds our hearts in Christian love.**" That tie that binds is very simply our Lord Jesus Christ. Not only does He forgive our wrongs, but He also supplies us with a never-ending supply of forgiveness that we can use in our relationships with each other. Are you having difficulties in a relationship? With a parent, a child, an employer, maybe your spouse. Remember the forgiveness that Jesus has given to you even when you didn't deserve it or when you deserved just the opposite -- and then apply that forgiveness to the fellow Christian with whom you are battling.

While all of us acknowledges the unity we have with our other congregational members, sometimes we don't feel all that united, do we. We may feel isolated, unwelcome, or just plain out of the loop. When we do, we need to remember our Unity in Christ. Every single person in the United States who has had a heart transplant has a different heart from the other heart transplant patients. They probably had different experience in getting that heart and in living with that heart. But every single living heart transplant patient has one thing in common with every other one -- they're all alive -- alive because they received a new heart.

My friends in Christ, if you can't identify anything else in common with another fellow Christian, please remember that we've all received a new heart. We've received it from our God -- our Triune God who made us, saved us, and renewed us. **Our Triune God Gives Unity -- through peace with God and through peace with one another.** May we enjoy that peace every day until we taste the perfect peace of heaven,

May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all."

Amen.