

Holy Trinity Sunday
May 26, 2054
Lincoln Heights Lutheran Church
Romans 8:12-17

Romans 8:12-17 (EHV)

¹²So then, brothers, we do not owe it to the sinful flesh to live in harmony with it. ¹³For if you live in harmony with the sinful flesh, you are going to die. But if by the Spirit you put to death the actions of the body, you will live.

¹⁴Indeed, those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. ¹⁵For you did not receive a spirit of slavery so that you are afraid again, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we call out, "Abba, Father!" ¹⁶The Spirit himself joins our spirit in testifying that we are God's children.

¹⁷Now if we are children, we are also heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, since we suffer with him, so that we may also be glorified with him.

Dear Friends in Christ,

God is three in one, like a clover has three leaves...sort of. God is like an apple that has a core, flesh and a peel...except that God is not exactly like that either. God is like water which can be solid, liquid or gas...except that the Triune God cannot be explained by this either. Since it is Trinity Sunday, I'll stop with three examples today. You have probably heard some of these and you can let me know others after the service today. People have tried to use many different analogies to explain how God can be three in one. And perhaps parts of these analogies can be helpful in getting us thinking about God as the one God who is Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

However, as they say, every analogy limps. Some of these can lead to misunderstandings and straight up false teachings about the one, true God. For instance, those who compare God to water that can sometimes be solid as ice, sometimes liquid, and sometimes vapor may give the impression that God sometimes is the Father. But other times he appears as the Son or as the Holy Spirit. The Bible clearly tells us that God has always been Father, Son, and Holy Spirit and always will be. He does not change between modes. He is three in one, the Triune God. So maybe the use of analogies is not the best way to communicate who God is.

In addition, God has not really asked us to figure out the inner workings of God. He asks us to believe him as he describes himself in the Bible. But God does not require us to come up with a mathematical formula or logical proof to show how a being can be one and three at the same time. It is beyond our human reason to do such a thing. We are to trust our Triune God.

Instead of figuring out how God can be who he is, we are to marvel at who he is and learn what our Triune God has done for us. That is what Paul tells us about in Romans 8 this morning. Today, we marvel at how Father, Son, and Holy Spirit work in perfect harmony as the one, true God for our lives now and forever.

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The Triune God Makes Us Children of God Now

All people can rightly call God, the Father, because he made all people. But the Son of God makes it so that even sinners can refer to God as our Father. For Jesus, the true Son of God, paid for the sin of the world upon the cross. By his suffering and death, Paul can write at the beginning of Romans 8(:1), “There is now no condemnation for those in Christ Jesus.” And the Holy Spirit has brought us into God’s family by adoption. He brought us to trust in Christ and to call God, “Abba, Father!” See how the Triune God works for your life now. He has made you his child now.

What a privilege to call God our Father. What a blessing to have Jesus as our Brother! We are not second-class members of the family. Certainly, we are not the same as Jesus, but the Father treats us as his very own children because of the merits of Christ and the work of the Spirit in our lives.

This means that we do not follow God out of fear of punishment. We are not driven to do what he says because we are scared of his anger. Instead, we are moved by his love for us. He adopted us as his children, treats us like he treats Christ and listens to our prayers when we call to him, “Abba, Father.” Life is good with God the Father as our Father.

But life now is also life in a world under the curse of sin. Life now is a life in which every one of us still carries around a sinful nature. That old, sinful self wants to return to living without God as our Father and Christ as our Brother. It longs for the streets of immorality and being its own god. It tells us lies as Paul explains when he writes, “*we do not owe it to the sinful flesh to live in harmony with it.*” The sinful flesh tells us that do owe it our obedience.

If you’ve ever tried to eat according to a specific diet of food, your body and mind will often tell you that you owe it to yourself to eat that ice cream. In a similar way the sinful flesh tells us that we owe it to ourselves to indulge in sin. We owe it to ourselves to retaliate against the sibling who hit us. We owe it to ourselves to let loose a long stream of vulgarities because someone made us angry. We owe it to ourselves to spend our money on whatever makes us happy instead of being good stewards for the good of others. And when we’ve been battling against temptation for a while and had some success, the sinful flesh in us will tell us we owe it to ourselves to treat ourselves to a favorite sin since we’ve been so good today. It’s all lies from the sinful flesh.

Paul tells us that we don’t owe the sinful flesh anything. We are children of the heavenly Father. We are siblings of the eternal Son of God. The Holy Spirit dwells within us and leads us to a life of obedience to the one, true God instead of living for sin which leads to death. And our Triune God continually forgives his children, bought with the blood of Christ. The Holy Spirit continually calls us back to the way of life by connecting us with God’s Word and Sacraments. For we are who God has made us – his forgiven children – and he will do everything possible to keep us. For this reason, we also continue the battle against sin and temptation in our lives. We no longer seek to satisfy the desires of our sinful flesh that wants to destroy us. Instead, we give thanks to the Triune God by our lives of obedience because he has saved us for this life and the one to come.

The Triune God Makes Us Heirs of Christ’s Glory

The scene is common in mystery novels and dramatic shows and movies. The family and close friends are gathered in a room for the reading of the will. Who will get the house? Who will get the cars? Who will get the cash? Who will get the valuable collection of whatever? Maybe someone is left out of the will entirely. Maybe the servant gets everything, and the children get nothing. There is always suspense about who is going to be named as an heir and what the heirs will each receive.

Our Triune God takes all the mystery out of it. He tells us exactly who the heirs are and what the

heirs will each receive.

¹⁶The Spirit himself joins our spirit in testifying that we are God's children. ¹⁷Now if we are children, we are also heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, since we suffer with him, so that we may also be glorified with him.

If you ever wonder if you will receive an inheritance from your heavenly Father, listen to the Holy Spirit. He testified at your baptism that you are now God's child. He testifies in the Word that you belong to God. He testifies through the Lord's Supper that you are united with Christ and with all believers on earth and in heaven. Yes, you are a child and heir of God.

The inheritance, like the inner workings of the Trinity, is a bit beyond our limited understanding now. We know that it is more than we could imagine. It is eternal and unfading and will never spoil. It is described as seeing Christ face to face, as living in a city with gold for street and precious gems in the walls and single pearls for each of twelve gates. It is a place where the heirs of God will lack nothing good, and no evil will be near. Heaven, eternal life, is an inheritance beyond any human inheritance. And we will not be left out.

We will not receive only a small portion. We will not be the stepchildren who get a pittance while the children by birth get the good stuff. For all who are children of God are "fellow heirs with Christ." We get what Christ gets, or maybe better said: We get what Christ has earned for us. Christ deserves to inherit everything from his Father because the Son is perfect and offered perfect obedience to his Father, even offering his life on the cross to save all who have the sinful flesh. Christ earned and deserved it all and shares it all with his brothers and sisters. He is not ashamed to be our Brother, but instead loves to share his rightful inheritance of the eternal glories of heaven with you.

Let me try one more analogy to help us understand the Triune God. The Triune God is like one God in three persons – the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. I suppose that is really not an analogy, just the way God describes himself. Thanks be to the Triune God for being beyond our full comprehension and yet bringing us fully into his family now and forever.

Amen.