

Trinity Sunday
John 17: 1-26
May 30, 2010

EXHORDIUM

Today is Trinity Sunday. After Pentecost, we finally have the full Revelation of God present with us. Now, we know what God is like and how He is to dwell with His people.

The Godhead was in covenant prior to creation. This is important. The Father, Son and Holy Spirit loved one another and were wholly committed to one another in eternity past. The statement that the Godhead was committed to one another in eternity past may strike us as odd because the Father, Son and Spirit are one. Why do they have to be completely committed to one another? Isn't it the case, that their very essence *requires* a commitment? Or, we might think their very essence even *necessitates* commitment and unity?

I do not believe that is accurate. God is the only truly autonomously free being. He does what is right because He chooses to do so. The Godhead could make choices that are not fully consistent with His own character. But He never does that.

Think about this in terms of your own person. Obviously, this is an analogy and all analogies of God break down at some point. But we can imagine a man, who is one person, conflicted by his own desires. For instance, let's say that he is 40 lbs overweight and knows that this is harmful to his health. He is in earnest about this in heart and mind. He fully intends to do what is both good and right. He is going to exercise, eat right and begin to discipline himself. But he is conflicted. His heart and mind are committed but his body is holding back. We all have what we call muscle memory. Those who play the piano well just know where to put their hands. Their muscles remember the width of the keys and the notes they will make. You do not even think about it anymore, you just do it. Well our bodies are like that. This man has habits, even muscle memory. When he sits down after work, he eats a bowl of ice cream. Before he goes to bed, he eats a bowl of cereal. At dinner, he always takes a second helping. And it is not enough to simply *will* to change. Some of these physical events need to change. Don't sit down after work, go for a walk. Do not wander into the kitchen before bed, read in the bedroom for 20 minutes, instead. At dinner, leave the table after the first helping instead of sitting there having that food stare you in the face. So, we humans CAN be conflicted, even in one body.

But God, as Father, Son and Spirit, always does that which is right and good for the entire Godhead. The persons could have acted as wayward body parts but they did not and do not. They always do what the whole person of the Godhead requires of them. We see this explicitly in the life of Jesus when He asks the Father to take this cup away from Him but still desires to do the Lord's will. Part of the Godhead wanted to do something different but He wanted to love His Father and be consistent in His own person more than He wanted to do what He wanted to do.

There is an order, at least in our understanding. The Father is who we generally mean when we say the word God. It is He that sent the Son to the Earth. The Father and the Son have sent the Spirit. The Son always does the Father's will. The Spirit always does the will of the Father and the Son. In this order, we see a submission in place. In theology, we call this the Economic Trinity. This simply means that God has to do work in the real world and we humans have to relate to Him. So, we see more stark distinctions and an order of submission. But in God's essence, who He is in His own Triune being, these distinctions become more blurry. In theology, we call this the Deontological Trinity. That is, God in His essence.

But the Father and the Son and the Spirit are all distinct persons and each fully God. This part gives us trouble because we do not have an earthly analogy good enough to explain this truth.

This all has very important ramifications for us. We are seeking to be like God. When we say that, we should not think that we are simply trying to be like Jesus. We should try to be like and if we were really like Jesus, then we would be faithful and godly, through and through. But God, Himself, has revealed more of Himself than just Jesus. He is Father, Son, and Spirit.

So, to be like God, it is not enough to only be like Jesus, or like the Spirit, or like the Father. Especially, if being like only one of the persons of the Godhead causes division with the rest of the body. Now, one of the things I want us to realize is that we need balance. And the Trinity gives us balance. But balance at the individual level is very difficult to attain. It may even be impossible. And that very impossibility is not a problem but the truth that we are created in God's image.

When God created Adam, it was the one time in His creative week that He said that something was not good. It was not good that man should dwell alone. Remember that Adam was not *really* alone. He had a garden. He had work to do. He had lots of different animals to serve and to be served by. He had an intimate relationship with God, His creator. He was not *totally* alone. But God calls him alone because he did not have any human being to share his life with. He did not have a wife so that the two might be one.

More to my point, he did not have a way to more accurately image the Godhead. He could not do this well as a single human being.

Each man, woman and child is called to be like God. We are supposed to reveal Fatherly characteristics, headship, leadership, authority, responsibility. We are supposed to be like Jesus, revealing submission, compassion, mercy, intimacy, humanity. We are supposed to walk in and reveal the Spirit, wisdom, discretion, thoughtfulness, mystery, communion, hope, faith. We each have a calling before God. However, this cannot be accomplished in isolation. No Christian is an island. And while some individual Christians are really well rounded, it is more likely that the body as a whole is needed to reveal all of these characteristics of God very accurately.

It takes community of vibrant believers to reveal God. So, as we celebrate this Trinity Sunday, we need to have some understanding as to what we are attempting to accomplish. Stark individualism is rampant in the American Church. Part of the reason we can even be so individualistic is because of the very blessing of God. We have a lot of money. We have lots of resources. Because of this, we think we can get along without the body of Christ. At least until we find ourselves in crisis.

But we need to learn the lesson before crisis. We have begun well in this church. I believe it is accurate to say that you know and love one another better than what occurs in most American churches. However, to make that statement is not to boast that we are where we want to be or even that we are where we should be. We are just beginning. If we compared where we are to a K-12 education, I'd say we are about in 3rd grade. We are better than pre-schoolers. We learned our ABC's of love in kindergarten. We walked ourselves to school in 2nd grade. We are just starting to read in earnest through trials here in 3rd grade. As the expressions of our love become more committed and difficult, some might decide that they prefer to play Christian rather than read the more difficult chapter book of service and suffering.

The statement that we are in 3rd grade is not meant as any sort of chastisement. We do not get mad at 3rd graders for being in 3rd grade, especially if they are the first person in their family to go to a real school or even learn how to read. Third grade ain't so bad in that situation. My grandfather, James Hurt, only made it through 3rd grade. My dad, Virgil, made it through 8th grade and then joined the army when he was 14. My dad was educated compared to my grandfather. So, when my brothers and sisters and I graduated from high school and then some of us from college, it was a big deal.

Maybe Providence Church is in 3rd grade. Maybe once we graduate, we will look back to today and realize we were really in 8th grade now. Hard to say. But my point is that we still have a long way to go. I think we still tend to be fairly isolated as families. We have not yet learned how important our church body is to our spiritual growth as individuals and as families. We've got a glimpse of it but only a glimpse. Instead of pulling back from this, we need to push deeper into it.

How do we do that? I don't have the specific answer for you today. But we do need to think about and worship God as revealed in His Triune nature. As we do this, we will become more like Him. This should create a natural outflow in the way that we live before Him. We will become more united within our diversity because we will be like God.

The other truth works as well. As we seek to walk in obedience, loving one another, sacrificing ourselves, our time, our money, our work, our stuff, our bodies, our minds, our prayers, then we will be sanctified, becoming more like God.

What Godly Characteristics Should We Be Developing that Reflect the Trinity?

Philipians 1:27 Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ: that whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel;

The faith of the gospel is strong because believers are of one spirit and one mind. They strive for the gospel but they also strive for unity.

Stand Fast in One Spirit- Be of the same spirit. This may refer to being of the same Holy Spirit. That is, showing that because you stand fast, you belong to God. Or, it might refer to each of you being of the same spirit. That is, have the same sort of demeanor prevalent in your midst. Be humble towards one another. Be kind. Be courteous. Defer for the sake of unity. But stand fast means that you still stand for those principles that shall not be compromised. Stand fast for the gospel. Jesus is Lord and we will not back down from that truth. We will stand fast.

So, don't get prideful. May we as church be known for being gentle, long-suffering, kind, understanding, etc. But also principled. Willing to bend but only for the sake of Christ and the gospel.

Striving together with One Mind- With One mind. Again, that mind might be in the broad sense, the mind of Christ. But it should reside in each one of us. To the extent that we are multiple minded, we need to work towards likemindedness. Where we disagree, we need to continue to

dialogue, striving to see the truth as revealed in the Word of God. We should not defend our ground merely because it is OUR ground. We should only defend that which we believe is the Lord's ground. Thus, we are not afraid to alter our views, as long as altering them causes us to be conformed to the mind of Christ, thus bringing us closer to likemindedness.

So, do not be content with your own mind and your own opinions. That is not good enough. If you differ from your brother on important issues, then you should assume at least one of three things.

1. That your brother needs more communication and correction. That is probably your default starting point. Ex. Various theological positions, Sovereignty, paedobaptism.
2. That your position needs to be adjusted. Ex., full blown Preterism, Post-Millennial to the max. Only homeschool. Or only Classical education is acceptable. Just because it is best does not mean that it is the only option.
3. That your two points of view are needed in the church to show God's unity in diversity. Ex. Home school, Christian school, various views of politics, church government, worship styles, etc. Although we are striving for likemindedness in the vital things, we want to always reveal the diversity of the Trinity.

Philippians 2 ¹If *there be* therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies, ²Fulfil ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, *being of one accord, of one mind.*

If there is anything consoling in Christ, comfort of love and fellowship of the Spirit, be likeminded. Hey folks, this is central to the faith! Same love. One accord. One mind.

³Let *nothing be done* through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. ⁴Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. ⁵Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus:

Like-mindedness is Christlike. But being Christlike, it is also Trinitarian because Jesus Christ was likeminded with His Father and with the Spirit. So, as we strive for likemindedness we are being like God. It is also important for us to note that likemindedness does not make us robots. It is a full expression of our diversity, of our differences but all for one purpose to reveal God's glory. We say that this is to glorify God. But to reveal God's glory is to show His Spirit. This is virtually impossible to do without

being like-minded because not being likeminded is simply not a revelation of God.

But can't we disagree? Sure but how do you do it? Like Jesus, not my will? Or unlike Jesus, Not your will but mine be done.

No Strife- strife is causing trouble. Someone who is striving is trying to get ahead of everybody else. Strife always causes division. We can disagree but the purpose of discussing our disagreements is to come to agreements or understandings in the disagreements as listed above. We should never strive to win an argument solely for the sake of winning the argument. That is vain glory.

No Vainglory- What is the source of the strife? Unless you can show serious demonstrable sin in the position of your brother, then you are not seeking the glory of God in your strife. There is a sort of strife that is godly. The truth divides but we should not always divide over the truth. We should be patient. But sometimes the compromise of truth requires that we take a stand and cause trouble over it. But how do we know which is which?

One way is to try to assess why you are doing this? Is it really to the glory of God? Will what you are doing result in a more glorious kingdom? Will God be pleased with you for your position? Will the church benefit? Or, are you seeking to move ahead? Get a name for yourself? Win a fight? Get a following? If we truly believe that the chief end of man is to glorify God, then we should judge our actions according to this rule. Do our actions glorify Him? Or do they only glorify me?

Col. 3 8-10 But now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth. ⁹Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds; ¹⁰And have put on the new *man*, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him:

As the body of Christ, how should we be growing up?

Anger- getting mad at brothers and sisters.

Wrath- trying to get revenge.

Malice- having ill will towards others.

Blasphemy- taking the name of the Lord in vain, denying the power of God.

Filthy communication from your mouth- gossip, foul speech, complaining and grumbling, coarse jesting.

Don't lie to one another- should be able to be trusted by brothers in Christ.

Col 3:12-16 ²Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering; ¹³Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also *do ye*. ¹⁴And above all these things *put on* charity, which is the bond of perfectness. ¹⁵And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful. ¹⁶Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.

Bowels of mercies- mercy, empathy, sympathy

Kindness- not rough, not harsh

Humbleness of mind-not haughty, lowliness, ask questions, learn from others.

Meekness- submissiveness, lack of false pride, true evaluation of self, esteems others higher.

Long Suffering- patience, just as you would have them be towards you.

Forbearing one another- not taking offense easily. Don't be slighted. If so, you take yourself way too seriously.

Forgiving one another- when wronged, quickly and fully forgive.

Love as bond of perfectness- Love is the thing that ties us together. Bonded together. That is perfection. Speak truth in love. Not spineless but also not haughty.

Peace in heart equals peace in body- If your heart and mind are at peace, then your entire body is at rest. True of broader body. We are called to peace. If you are at peace in your heart, then it easy to be at peace with the broader body. If not, then you will cause trouble. Comfortable in your own skin, not agitated, not guilty.

Thankfulness- Peace issues forth in thankfulness. Individual thankfulness makes a thankful corporate body.

Word of Christ- Songs of Praise- Scripture and worship.

1Peter 3 Finally, *be ye* all of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, *be pitiful, be courteous*:

EXHORTATION

1John 4 ²No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us. ¹³Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit.