

Sermon for June 4, 2023 – Holy Trinity

2 Corinthians 13:14 EHV

Theme: **Your relief is found in . . .**

- 1) The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ
- 2) The Love of God the Father
- 3) The Fellowship with the Holy Spirit

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

Back when I was a kid, I remember seeing a series of commercials with the tagline: “Aspirin: the wonder drug that works wonders.” Aspirin certainly is a wonderful little drug – reducing all sorts of pain caused by colds, muscle aches, and even arthritis. But as beneficial as this drug may be, it is helpless in reducing the pain caused by spiritual and emotional distress. It does not remove the anxiety we feel due to our sins or the evils that surround us. Thankfully, God has given Christians something far better than aspirin for spiritual relief. He has given us the blessing of himself.

Let us consider the great blessing our Triune God has given us in himself, under the theme: **Your relief is found in . . .** 1) *The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ*, 2) *The Love of God the Father*, and 3) *The Fellowship with the Holy Spirit*.

Part One: The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Our earth is filled with billions of people, yet we often feel alone - as if something big is missing from our lives. What are we missing? God’s absence is what we feel in our hearts. And why do we feel this way? Let me explain: the LORD created humanity to live in perfect harmony and fellowship with him. Unfortunately, our first parents (Adam and Eve) fell into sin – separating themselves from the LORD and leaving a God-sized hole in their hearts. The result of their sin has been passed down from generation to generation – affecting every human on this earth. Instead of doing the good God wants us to do, we often find ourselves committing the evil he prohibits. Selfishness permeates our hearts – causing even our most pious works to be tainted with sin. And just as a bit of poison corrupts an entire glass of water, sin has permeated human nature. *“The wages of sin is death,”*<sup>i</sup> the Bible says. Our iniquities have separated us from God and left us hopeless.

But God did not want us hopelessly lost in hell forever. No, he loves us with an everlasting love that words cannot even begin to express. More than that, from before the world’s creation, God chose to put his love into action.

Jesus is God’s grace (his saving love) personified. He is the only begotten Son of the Father – true God from all eternity - who took on human flesh and blood to become like us in every way. Why? To save us from our sins. And how, exactly, would Jesus do that? First, by perfectly obeying His Father’s law in our place. Even though he was tempted in every way, just as we are, Jesus never sinned.<sup>ii</sup> He did this so that, through faith, his record of not sinning could become our record of not sinning.

But Jesus did not stop there. He took the guilt of our sins upon himself and went to the cross: suffering to such a degree as not to leave a single sin of the entire human race unpaid. *God shows his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*<sup>iii</sup>

But Jesus did not remain dead. He rose from his grave and ascended into heaven. From there, he directs the affairs of this earth - sending the Holy Spirit to awaken repentance and faith in people's hearts through the proclamation of His Gospel.

This, then, invites the question: What is faith? It is simply this: trusting that Jesus paid for all your sins in full. And why would Jesus do that? Grace. Jesus loves you so much that he willingly died for your forgiveness. By turning away from your sin and trusting in Him, Jesus freely gives you His forgiveness as a gift. And in giving you this gift, Jesus reconciles you to God – uniting you with him. He listens to your prayers – promising to work in all things for your good. And what is the greatest good God desires for you? That you live with him forever in paradise.

Yes, the grace of the LORD Jesus Christ has given Christians incredible hope throughout time. My prayer is that it does the same for you. Look at how much Jesus loves you: He died on the cross for all your sins. Look at what he is still doing – interceding to God the Father on your behalf. He promises to be with you throughout your earthly life.<sup>iv</sup> More than that, He promises to deliver you safely home to Himself in heaven. What comfort this offers us – especially when feelings of overwhelming guilt and shame plague us, tempting us to think we are too far gone to be saved. No, we are never too far gone for Jesus. By grace we are saved – fully and completely!

#### Part Two: The Love of God the Father.

But it is not only Jesus who loves us so deeply; God the Father also does. He planned a way to save us from before the world's creation. And what the Father planned in eternity, he also fulfilled in time: *“For God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish, but have eternal life.”*<sup>v</sup> Through Jesus' perfect life, innocent death, and glorious resurrection, God the Father has been reconciled to such a degree that He has adopted us as His children through Holy Baptism. How do I know? Because the Bible says: *you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.*<sup>27</sup> *Indeed, as many of you as were baptized into Christ have been clothed with Christ.*<sup>vi</sup>

Yes, through Holy Baptism, God adopted you to be his child. Do you understand what that means? It means He cares for us better than even the best earthly Father ever could. He listens to our prayers. He provides for our needs. He comforts us when we are hurting, strengthens us when we are weak, trains us in his word, and disciplines us for our good.<sup>vii</sup> Since we are clothed with His Son through baptism, He invites us to come to Him as boldly and confidently as little children come to their dear Father. He promises to send armies of angels to watch over us on this earth<sup>viii</sup> - delivering us from every evil to bring us safely home to Himself in heaven.<sup>ix</sup>

All these truths make us cry out with the apostle John: *How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are!*<sup>x</sup>

So, brothers and sisters in Christ: whenever trying times come our way – tempting us to question God's love – look at the cross and see the proof beyond all doubt that God loves you dearly, as the Bible says: *Indeed, he who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also graciously give us all things along with him?*<sup>xi</sup> Yes, dear Christian: God most certainly loves you. He will keep his promise to work in all things – even the evil we experience – for our eternal good.<sup>xii</sup>

#### Part Three: The Fellowship of the Holy Spirit.

Finally, let us talk about the last member of the Trinity – the Holy Spirit, whom God the Father and the Son sent to be our Counselor, Advocate, and guide in life. He teaches us through the Gospel. He opens our minds and hearts to receive all God’s Word says. He is the one who created faith in our hearts at our baptisms – sealing us as God’s very children and making our bodies His holy temple.

Just think of the intimate fellowship we share with Him. He is always with us, even when we do not recognize it. He knows what we are going through – always interceding to the Father on our behalf.

How comforting this is for us to know. Whenever dark days come - when we are at our wit’s end, not knowing what to pray because we are so confused, anxious, or weak – we can take comfort in knowing that the Holy Spirit is praying for us, as the Bible says: *In the same way the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we should pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that are not expressed in words. And he who searches our hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints, according to God’s will.*<sup>xiii</sup>

The Holy Spirit also encourages us through the communion of saints: Christians united with us in faith. He is with us whenever we study His word or worship together. Whenever we have a problem, he is there to listen and help. He uses fellow believers to warn us whenever we wander from him. He also uses them to comfort us with his forgiveness when we repent, as they lovingly share the Gospel of Christ with us. Yes, the Holy Spirit works through the encouragement of fellow believers – uniting us with each other and himself through faith in Jesus.

Brothers and sisters in Christ. Jesus warned us: in this world, you will have trouble. But He also said: “Take heart, I have overcome the world.”<sup>xiv</sup> So just as countless Christians in ages past have learned to look to their Triune LORD for relief during times of trouble, may you be led to do the same. Trust in Jesus for the forgiveness of your sins, and trust that *the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit are with you.* Amen

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<sup>i</sup> Cf Romans 6:23

<sup>ii</sup> Cf. Hebrews 4:15

<sup>iii</sup> Romans 5:8 EHV

<sup>iv</sup> Cf. Matthew 28:20

<sup>v</sup> John 3:16 EHV

<sup>vi</sup> Galatians 3:26 EHV

<sup>vii</sup> Cf. Hebrews 12:1-13

<sup>viii</sup> Cf. Psalm 91:11

<sup>ix</sup> Cf. 2 Timothy 4:18

<sup>x</sup> 1 John 3:1 NIV84

<sup>xi</sup> Romans 8:32 EHV

<sup>xii</sup> Cf. Romans 8:28

<sup>xiii</sup> Romans 8:26-27 EHV

<sup>xiv</sup> Cf. John 16:33