

Holy Trinity Sunday
Affirmation of Baptism (i.e., Confirmation) Sunday
May 22, 2016
Romans 8:14-17

Romans 8:14-17: For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God. 15 For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received a spirit of adoption. When we cry, "Abba! Father!" 16 it is that very Spirit bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God, 17 and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ—if, in fact, we suffer with him so that we may also be glorified with him.

Grace and peace to you from God our Father, and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!

So as I was planning for worship last Sunday, which was Pentecost Sunday, and I read Romans 8:14-17, I couldn't help but think what a wonderful passage for Confirmation Sunday. Why had the Holy Spirit not given me the insight last August, when I was laying out the confirmation schedule for the year, to schedule Confirmation Sunday alongside Pentecost Sunday and this beautifully penned text by the Apostle Paul? And so I thought this week, just how crazy is it for us to go back and revisit that passage from last week? Can we even do that given most of us Lutherans don't like to venture too far off the liturgical highway we are familiar with? Well, let's just be a bit crazy this week and traverse a new path together. But then the next thought hit me - it's also Holy Trinity Sunday and I really don't think there is a harder concept in Christianity to explain, comprehend and possibly even talk about than the Triune nature of God. Really, we worship one God; yet, while remaining one there are three beings: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. One-in-three; three-in-one. Oh boy – I have already added a speed bump to the day by adding another text and now that speed bump may have

just turned into a small mountain with a very steep grade. Nonetheless, something told me to stay the course, enjoy the ride, and trust it would all work out in the end – for that same Holy Spirit Jesus gave the young church last week would be with us today. That very same Holy Spirit we sometimes doubt is present. That very same Holy Spirit we will soon pray for to descend upon these four amazingly gifted and precious sons and daughters of God. However, the papers these youth have written and are before you today clearly reveal the Spirit is already deeply entrenched within each of them. Because once again, just as happens every single year, I was blown away by how well each of you articulated and spoke your faith and your relationship with God. Truly amazing! So why pray again for the Spirit's presence to be upon these youth? Why the need to invoke lady wisdom, according to Proverbs, once again into the hearts and minds of these young people if clearly the Spirit's presence is already there? Well, because as Jesus says to His disciples' in the gospel of John, "I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth." Discipleship is a lifelong journey and Mia, Jaylen, Matt and Matt it does not end today. This is not a graduation but rather an affirmation. An affirmation of God once again grabbing ahold of each of you in the arms of God's love and reminding you how precious you are in God's sight and that God is at work and using you in the church, in your daily lives, and in wherever and whatever God calls you to in the future. An affirmation each of you make before God, this assembly, and the

world that remaining in this mysterious relationship with God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit matters and is important to you. An affirmation or rather saying “yes” to the promises God made to each of you in your Baptism and promises each of you proclaim, preach, and lift up in your papers. Because truthfully, I really didn’t need to preach today – the gospel of God’s grace, the wisdom of the Holy Spirit, and the love of Jesus Christ is shining forth brightly through each of your papers. Listen!

- Mia
 - “I think that being a child of God means that you are protected and loved at all times, no matter what you have done, or how you have sinned. I know that God loves me, no matter how I praise him.”
 - “Grace means to me that he (God) is blessing us with love. Without God’s grace I would never be able to achieve the goals I set for myself and my goals to help other people.”
- Matt P.
 - “Getting baptized to me means that God chose me to be one of his children. God promised that he will always love and forgive me even in the worst of times.
 - “Worshipping is important because through it God is at work drawing closer with me,” and “Praying is a good way to come closer to God and thanking him for what he has done and that his Son died for us.”
- Jaylen
 - “Through baptism, God promised me forgiveness for my sins, everlasting love, and eternal life. He has accepted me the way I am and has let me know that I will never be alone.”
 - “‘I keep the Lord always before me; because He is at my right hand, I shall not be moved’ (Psalm 16:8) This verse shows us that no matter what we do, how many mistakes we make, God will always be by our side. He will never leave us alone or make us feel like He isn’t there. He will show us the light in the darkness of life.”
- Matt W.
 - “I feel being baptized means that you are welcomed and accepted by God to be part of God’s people, which is the church, and also that God promises to love me and forgive me forever. I have found

that God's grace is revealed to me in that even when I make a mistake God will forgive me."

- "I once saw an image that summarized this passage (referring to Ephesians 2:19-22) with these words, 'Whenever you feel unloved, unimportant or insecure, remember to whom you belong.' These are my favorite verses because it states that when you are down or just lonely remember who made you, God, and that God is there for you and that God still loves you and will love you always."

Pretty cool, isn't it? And so, let us circle back to Holy Trinity Sunday – still a mystery for which we all need the Spirit's guidance to continue to lead us into the truth. And while we may not every fully understand this divine relationship between Father, Son, and Spirit in our earth bodies these youth have lifted up a theme which is woven through every book of the Bible and that is God's will, desire, devotion, and relentless pursuit of remaining in relationship with God's people. A pursuit that led God to take on human flesh and be led to the cross to redeem and restore this relationship in the empty tomb of Easter morning.

The Apostle Paul in Romans 8 presents a familial image built on relationship and communication. It is an image steeped in love and affection. It is an image about God, all-powerful and all mighty able to do anything God wants including making us God's children out of love and grace. For many people this may seem odd? Too many people, including myself, will and have asked the question, "Why would God want me?" "Why would the God of the Universe who is able to do anything care about a sinner like me?" The answer may be found in the mystery of the Trinity. I once came across a commentary by Henry Brinton that portrayed a beautiful image of the Triune nature of

God. John of Damascus, a Greek theologian of the seventh century described the Trinity in terms of “dancing around.” God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit are like three dancers holding hands, dancing together in perfect love, harmony, and freedom. They are deeply one, but at the same time they are three. They are what they are in relation to each other – in a shared purpose, and in a mutual love, for all eternity. For God, it is all about relationship. A relationship between Father, Son and Spirit and a relationship we have been invited into to witness perfect love, harmony, and freedom.

What a beautiful dance we are invited to join? We are invited to join God the creator, God the redeemer, and God the sustainer and not only are we invited but as Paul reminds us we are called to be children. We are adopted and our adoption will be complete when Christ returns and our bodies are perfected in a resurrection like His. We are called by the Spirit in Baptism and united to the Son’s death and resurrection where we are given new life by God and signed and sealed with cross of Christ. God has given us an identity. God has claimed us as God’s own.

Mia, Jaylen, Matt, and Matt – God’s precious and beloved children. God’s sons and daughters. This is the relationship God has called you to in your baptisms - a fountain of endless grace, love, compassion, mercy, forgiveness, and salvation. We gather today to celebrate this most precious relationship. This most precious gift. And we do pray, because that is what the church does, for each of you and the Spirit’s presence to always be upon you and remind you in those difficult and challenging days

that you always return to these storied waters of baptism, the meal of our Lord, and to the people of God to be reminded of the promises the world can never, ever, take from you: You are God's! God loves you, the Son has saved you, and the Holy Spirit will always be with you! Amen.