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St. Paul's Lutheran Church  
2100 16<sup>th</sup> Street SW  
Austin, MN 55912-1749  
Pastor Ted Barthels  
Sermon preached on  
May 26, 2024  
Trinity Sunday

Scripture Lessons: Isaiah 6:1-8; John 3:1-17

Hymns: 239; 245; 23; 644

Grace be unto you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Sermon Text: Romans 8:12-17

Therefore, brethren, we are debtors—not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. <sup>13</sup>For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. <sup>14</sup>For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. <sup>15</sup>For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, “Abba, Father.” <sup>16</sup>The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, <sup>17</sup>and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together. (NKJV)

This is the Word of God.

Sanctify us, oh Lord, through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

In Christ Jesus, dear fellow Redeemed:

INTRO: Trinity Sunday

What is Trinity Sunday about? The obvious answer is, its about God being three persons in one God, and that the Triune God is the only true God. That truth is featured in our hymns; that truth is also apparent in our Scripture lessons. However, the real answer takes us deeper into the truth about God, who He is and what He is

about. In both our reading from Isaiah and in Jesus' words to Nicodemus we hear about how man's sin is removed. The Triune God is about the gospel, how God in His grace took care of the problem of sin, purifying us from our sin, and then worked faith and faith's response to God. So, Trinity Sunday is not only about the Three -in- One God, it is also about how we by God's gracious calling have been brought into a life of faith and good works.

Our text from Romans 8, a chapter of Scripture with multiple assurances of salvation, directs us to see sanctified Christian living as yet another assurance of God's grace in our lives. We are --

**THEME:** Indebted to the One True God  
for the Blessings of Salvation.

Our text begins by calling attention to a sharp contrast between the way the world perceives life and the way the Child of God sees life. Everyone maintains that people live with a certain obligation in life. The world, or our own sinful nature for that matter, calls for us to see that obligation is to self. We have all been told on multiple occasions: "You owe it to yourself;" or "You need to be true to yourself," or "You need to live however makes you happy." In the right context any of these statements may be rightly understood, but as a philosophy of life, that's the world encouraging you to be true to #1, and not to worry about what others think, and not to worry about what the Lord says in His Word.

What about the LORD, the God of our salvation? Where does the Lord fit into our thinking about life? We say, "Thank you, Lord," and then get on with life. One expression that in some parts of our country is a common way of saying "thank you" is to say, "Much obliged." In response one might say, "You're welcome," but if you're from Minnesota, you might be more likely to say, "You bet." Now, let's think about that hypothetical conversation as a conversation between the redeemed sinner and Almighty God. Redeemed sinner is delivered from his sin and eternal death at the cost of God's only begotten Son dying on the cross. Having been called to faith by the Holy Spirit, the redeemed sinner says, "Much obliged," and the Lord says, "You bet, indeed you are." There is a great deal more to "being obliged" than a simple "thanks, now I'll

be on my way living life as I always have.” That would be giving the Lord “short shrift.” “Short shrift” is defined by “Alexa” as “A short, unsympathetic dismissal of an issue.”

Remembering that Romans chapter 8 is about leading believers to a greater assurance of salvation and eternal life, how does our text address our response to the gospel. “*Therefore, brethren, we are debtors—not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. <sup>13</sup> For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.*” (v.12-13)

Assurance of life and salvation is not found in believing that we are indebted or obligated to serve ourselves with our selfish ambitions and sinful desires, but rather assurance of life and salvation is found in believing that we are indebted or obligated to the Lord who saved us from sin, and hell. Our text goes on to inform us of how we owe our spiritual and eternal lives to the Triune God. It continues by informing us of how we are –

### **I. Indebted to the Spirit for Calling Us to be God’s Children.**

“*As many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. <sup>15</sup> For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, “Abba, Father.” <sup>16</sup> The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God.*” (v.14-16a)

Are you among those who are led by the Spirit of God? How can one tell? It really isn’t all that difficult. If you buy in to the ways and thinking of the world, you are being led by the world, and by your own sinful flesh. Now granted, both the world and our own sinful flesh influence us far more than we like. And that’s the key isn’t it? It’s far more than we would like. We hate the sin in our lives. We turn to the Lord in daily contrition and repentance. We confess our sins and seek God’s mercy and forgiveness. We endeavor to glorify God in our lives, in both our words and our behavior. That isn’t from within us, for if it were coming from us, it would be accompanied with the thought, “*And what a good boy am I!*” Or it would come from a heart filled with fear, that if we don’t keep the commandments we will be crushed under the weight of God’s wrath.

By the Spirit you have not received the spirit of bondage to fear, but rather the spirit of adoption. You have been brought into the family of God. We live under His loving arms. He assures us of salvation.

God is our Father, and we are --

## **II. Indebted to the Father for the greatness of His Love.**

Worldly fathers aren't always kind and loving to their children. In fact, some earthly fathers have to have their children taken away from them because they are cruel and abusive rather than nurturing and gentle. Our Father in heaven is addressed as "Abba, Father." That is the way Jesus Himself turned to His heavenly Father when in great distress in the Garden of Gethsemane Jesus prayed so fervently that if it were possible the cup of suffering could be taken from Him. He poured out His heart to the Father and knew that He was heard. And the Father sent an angel to minister to Him.

(Mark 14)

"Abba, Father" is a term of endearment, and more, it is a term of loving trust and confidence. How is that possible? The Spirit leads us to the Father and assures us that we are children of God. We learn of the greatness of God's love for undeserving sinners, a love that was so great that "*He gave His only begotten Son that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life.*"

(John 3:16)

Living under the wonder and grace of God's love, a love that is greater than any love to be found in this world, to be so dearly loved, we love, "*We love because He first loved us!*" (1 John 4:19 EHV) We love from the bottom of our hearts, we feel such a debt of love and gratitude to God for the love and care He showers upon each of us every day as He watches over us in all our ways. "*He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all thing.*"

(Romans 8:32)

Yes, the Father didn't spare His Son, and the Son willingly went to the cross as the man Christ Jesus. And so we are --

## **III. Indebted to the Son for the Inheritance Secured for Us in Heaven.**

The Holy Spirit called us to faith, and assures us that we are the children of God. It is so by the Spirit of adoption. We were aliens, we were strangers, and yet in God's grace we were chosen and adopted into the household of God. Being children of God, we were qualified to inherit that which our Lord Jesus secured for us by His death, resurrection, and ascension into heaven.

Our text assures us that *“If children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together.”* (v.17)

We are much obliged to the Lord Jesus. Indeed, we are indebted to Him for all He suffered on our behalf. He endured all we read about in the passion history, all that we confess in our Creeds to redeem us from sin, to redeem us back to God. He endured the scourging, and the crown of thorns, and the agony of crucifixion, but far worse, Jesus endured the curse of God, God-forsakenness because of our sin. And then He died. He died for us. He had no sin of His own. *“The wages of sin is death.”* (Romans 6:23) He died for your sin and mine, and He was buried. On the third day He rose again according to the Scriptures, and Jesus was exalted to the right hand of God as His inheritance received by Jesus as our brother, as our Redeemer.

Yes, we are indebted to Jesus because He did all that to prepare a place for us in heaven. By God's grace in Christ Jesus, we are heirs of the glory that Jesus secured in heaven. We are joint heirs with Christ. Then our text says, if indeed we suffer with Him. Paul isn't saying that we earn this glory through suffering. It is ours by grace through faith. Jesus won it for us. What Paul is saying is that as we follow Jesus, as we live in faith as His disciples, suffering will come with true discipleship. We will glorify Jesus and be true to His name because that is what faith will do. We will not turn away. What Paul is saying is that in that suffering, not suffering we seek out, but that sufferings which comes upon us for the name of Christ, we will again find assurance that we have life and salvation in His name.

Paul puts this in its proper perspective in the very next verse following our text: *“For I consider that the sufferings of this*

*present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.”* (Romans 8:18) Some, perhaps most of us suffer little more for Jesus than some baiting, some name calling, or other insults, maybe a loss of employment or a business setback. Is any of that worthy of comparison to what Christ suffered for us? Many have been harassed, arrested, imprisoned, even executed, and that happens in the world today. If we suffer together with Jesus even to that bitter extent, its still not worthy of comparison to the glory Jesus won for us. It’s not worthy of comparison to the GLORY Jesus has secured for you in heaven. We are deeply indebted to the Lord for our lives and our very beings! May we always glorify the name of Jesus!

So now let us consider again, why a Trinity Sunday? It is not only to remind us who the One and only true God is, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, but also the wonders of grace and salvation God bestowed upon us miserable sinners. We are reminded that we are indebted to God the Holy Spirit for sanctifying us, setting us apart from sin and the world by calling us to faith and to be children of God. We are indebted to God the Father who loved this world of sinners and sent His Son to save a sinful world, who loves tenderly, and hears our prayers, and cares for us all our days unto eternal life. WE are indebted to God the Son who came down to earth to suffer and die as our brother that we might live with Him in the glories of heaven. Yes, Trinity Sunday reminds us all well why we should commit with Joshua of old, and say: *“As for me and my house, we will serve the LORD!”* (Joshua 24:15)

**AMEN.**

May the peace of God which passes all understanding keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.