

## Father's Day and Trinity Sunday

Today is an interesting day in the Church calendar. We celebrate Father's Day, a mostly secular holiday giving thanks for fathers and father figures who guide, protect, and reflect the love of God. And we also mark Trinity Sunday, the day the Church celebrates the mystery and majesty of one God in three Persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. At the center of both of these occasions is a truth written by the Psalmist, "What is mankind that You are mindful of them, human beings that You care for them? You have made them a little lower than the angels and crowned them with glory and honor," (Psalm 8:4-5).

The Psalmist, in this case King David, looks up at the stars and asks, "Why do You care about us?" In the vastness of creation, humanity seems small, yet God gives us astonishing dignity. This is a message we all need to hear, and particularly fathers today. God crowns us with glory not because of who we are, but because of who He is. That "who He is," brings us to the Trinity. The Triune God – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit – has forever existed in a relationship of love. Out of that love, we were created, redeemed, and sustained.

Many people think of the Trinity as a riddle. John Wesley, the founder of Methodism, saw it differently. For him, the Trinity is not a doctrine to be dissected, but rather a mystery to be embraced in faith and worship. He wrote, "I believe in One living and true God, who is everlasting, without body, parts, or passions; of infinite power, wisdom, and goodness; the Maker and Preserver of all things. And in unity of this Godhead there are Three Persons."

Wesley wasn't satisfied with dry theological explanations. He insisted that the Trinity is not just a truth to affirm, but a life to enter. God is love, Wesley said – and because God is Triune, love is at the center of the divine life. So when we speak of God as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, we are saying that God is Relationship. God is self-giving Love. And we were created and designed to live in that Love. Let's clarify this using one of Paul's letters. If you have a Bible or Bible app handy, turn with me to Romans 5:1-8. **Read Romans 5:1-8.**

## Peace with God

Our passage starts out with a really important statement. "Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ," (Rom.5:1). We have peace with God. Not fear, or uncertainty, or striving for approval. Peace. That peace comes from the Father, through the Son, and it's confirmed by the Holy Spirit. John Wesley believed that justification by faith was a doorway into a living relationship with the Father.

When we trust Jesus, we are reconciled to God. No longer estranged, or outsiders. We become beloved children of the Father. We stand in grace, rather than groveling in guilt. Wesley called this the beginning of salvation – the moment when grace becomes real in our hearts. It's about more than just getting to heaven. It's about living in the light of God's love now.

Most dads I know want peace in their homes. Unlike Archie Bunker, we know that peace doesn't mean silence – it means right relationships. Paul tells us we're justified by faith, which means we're declared right with God not from our performance, but by God's grace. This is good news – especially for fathers! The pressure to be perfect is heavy. Maybe you're feeling the pressure to hold everything together – to be strong, wise, and loving all the time. Maybe you're aware of your shortcomings.

Listen friends, your standing with God isn't based on how well we parent – it's based on how fully we trust Jesus. Look at verse 2, "Through Him we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we boast in the hope of the glory of God." We don't crawl in shame – we stand in grace! We're not orphans – we're beloved children of the Father, through the Son, by the Spirit. Our identity is grounded in the love of the Father. He's made the way for us to live in peace and confidence.

### **Present in our Suffering**

Paul's a pretty down-to-earth guy. He's realistic. Receiving God's grace doesn't mean that life's going to be a bed of roses. He writes, "We also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us," (verses 3-5).

This is the purpose of the Holy Spirit – the Third Person of the Trinity, or as Wesley called it, our "Three-in-One God." Wesley talked frequently about the witness of the Spirit as a deep, inward assurance of God's love. The Spirit isn't some far off presence that floats above us, somewhere out there. The Holy Spirit of God comes to us, and dwells inside us – especially in times of suffering.

Fatherhood – and life in general – is filled with suffering. We experience disappointment, exhaustion, moments of doubt and regret. Sometimes as dads – as parents – we even have our share of prodigals. But the Spirit transforms all that suffering into something redemptive. Paul tells us that suffering produces endurance. Endurance shapes our character. And character gives birth to hope.

I think sometimes people get in a mindset that Christians must walk around with rose-colored glasses on all the time, and that the hardships in life must not really faze them. That's not true. Things happen in our lives, and we can become greatly

disturbed. But we have this hope which Paul speaks of. And that makes all the difference. The hope he's talking about is the sure confidence that God IS present, loving, and faithful. The Father loves us. The Son redeems us. And the Spirit sustains us. An old saint of the Church once said that the Christian life isn't so much about pardon for sin and peace in heaven, but more about the power over sin and transformation here and now.

## **Christ Died for Us**

Paul goes on in our passage today, to summarize the Gospel in three verses. He says: At just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous person, though for a good person someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates His own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us, (verses 6-8).

Friends, that's the Gospel message. It's the heart of our faith. It shows the character of the Son – Jesus Christ. He reveals to us the depths of Divine Love. He didn't wait for us to get our acts together. He died for us while we were powerless, while we were ungodly – we were enemies of God, and He died for us then – while we were still sinners. We were actively sinning against God and against people, and He willingly went to the cross and took the nails for us. Wow, how He loves us!

This is the love that really moved John Wesley to become all that God had intended. Wesley was an Anglican priest, had been kind-of on the outs with the higher-ups in the Church of England. He returns from a missions trip in Georgia, which was disappointing, and felt rejected by the Church, and he was reluctant to go to a Moravian society meeting at Aldersgate Street. The Moravians were Germans who were part of the United Brethren Church, one of the predecessor denominations of the United Methodist Church. At the time, Wesley was having what we would call today a crisis of faith. He wasn't sure about salvation, or the love of God.

He goes reluctantly to this German Moravian society meeting, and has what's become known as his "Aldersgate Experience." Of it, he wrote: "I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone for salvation; and an assurance was given me that He had taken away my sins, even mine, and saved me from the law of sin and death."<sup>1</sup> What were the Moravians reading about that night? Martin Luther's preface and commentary to the Epistle to the Romans. We're reading a piece of the same thing today – pretty cool, right?

That "even mine" statement by Wesley captures the wonder of grace. The Son didn't die for the world in general – He died for you and me. That's what crowns us with

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<sup>1</sup> Joe Iovino, "Holy Spirit Moments: Learning from Wesley at Aldersgate," retrieved 6/11/2025, at <https://www.umc.org/en/content/holy-spirit-moments-learning-from-wesley-at-aldersgate>.

glory and honor. It's not about our worthiness – we will forever be unworthy – it's all about His willingness to lay His life aside in exchange for ours.

So let's do a quick check to see how well you've paid attention today. Who sent the Son to save us? God the Father. How do we know the love of God revealed through the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ? By the Holy Spirit, poured into our hearts. This is the work of our Triune God. The Father sent the Son. The Son gave Himself for us. The Spirit assures us of this love, even now in this moment.

### **God's Vision for Humanity**

When we see Jesus on the cross, we see the love of our Triune God in action. He doesn't demand perfection before offering help. He steps into our weakness, offers us His strength, and crowns us with His honor. This is transformative for all of us, and for the fathers here today. I want you to hear this: You don't need to be a superhero – none of us need to be. You're not alone. You're loved. You're redeemed. And through Christ, you're being renewed.

Thinking back to the Psalm we heard earlier, what the Psalmist saw in creation, Paul, the writer of the Book of Romans, sees fulfilled in redemption. The Father created us in love. His intention from creation has been to share His glory – not to hoard it. The Son redeemed us in grace. His mission is to restore what sin had broken and reclaim our crown – our right relationship with God. The Spirit fills us with power and peace. The Spirit's power enables us to live into that calling with courage, humility, and love.

Wesley preached a lot about salvation as being renewed in the image of God, or what he called entire sanctification – being made holy in love. We were created to reflect the glory of our Triune God. The image has been flawed by sin. In Christ, the image is restored. The Spirit renews us each day, making us more and more like Jesus, so that we might live in the fullness of the Father's love. This is the practical power of the Trinity. It's about more than just who God is – it's about who we are becoming in Him. We're invited into the life of God – not as far-off, distant servants or slaves, but as beloved children now.

I recently saw a billboard on the east side of Sidney saying, "Are you committing idolatry? Scripture says God is one, not three-in-one," with a link at the bottom to a website. Now friends, I checked out the website – it's pretty flaky. There are folks who say stuff like this, but they don't spend time in the word. They aren't reading their Bibles – they're taking stuff they've heard from someone else yapping on Facebook or YouTube and running with it. If you ever sit down to talk with folks who think this way, and they've actually spent time in the word, what you'll find oftentimes is the idea that God operated in history in three modes – what's known as modalism. It's an ancient heresy that the Council of Nicaea addressed in the Nicene Creed. The Bible doesn't

come out and say directly that God is Three-in-One, but over and over there's evidence that points to it in both the Old and the New Testaments.

We need to understand that the Trinity isn't some abstract theological topic. It's a holy Mystery, and the foundation of who we are and how we live. We were created by God in love, redeemed by Him through His love, and are sustained by His love. That's why Jesus could say in John 17:21-22, [I pray] "that all of them may be one, Father, just as You are in Me and I am in You. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that You have sent Me." Because of the atoning work of Jesus Christ on the cross, we've been invited into the divine family – or, like we talked about last week – we've been adopted.

### **Crowned by the Grace of our Triune God**

As followers of Jesus, we must be willing to live out our faith – in our homes, in relationships, in the daily grind of life. So dads and father-figures – all of us, really – when you show for your kids, when you offer patience instead of anger, and when you serve instead of demand, you're living the love of our Triune God. Thank you. Your role is a holy one, because you're reflecting God's love in tangible ways. And for those of us carrying wounds today – from fathers who were absent or abusive, or those missing their dads – know that our Heavenly Father sees you. He claims you. Jesus walks with you. The Spirit lives inside you. The Trinity gives us healing, belonging, and hope.

"Lord, our Lord, how majestic is Your name in all the earth!" (Psalm 8:1, 9). We're reminded that all glory begins and ends with God. In the face of the vastness of the creation, or the magnitude of our problems, we may feel very small. But God says, "I have called you by name. You are Mine," (Isa. 43:1). He crowns us with glory and honor, because we're justified by the Son, we have peace with the Father, and we're filled with the Holy Spirit.

He continues to call us today to "spread scriptural holiness throughout the land." We do that, rooted in the grace of Jesus, the love of the Father, and the power of the Holy Spirit. So today, go knowing you're loved. Live this week as people who have been crowned with glory and honor. And reflect the goodness of our Triune God!

**Prayer:** Holy God, we praise You for the mystery of Your being, and the majesty of Your love. You make us in Your image, redeem us through Christ, and fill us with Your Spirit. Bless the fathers and those who love like them. Heal the brokenhearted. Renew the weary. Remind us again that we are crowned with glory because of Your grace – and not through our own striving. May we live as Your children now. Walking in the love of the Father, standing in the grace of the Son, and rejoicing in the power of the Spirit. In the strong name of Jesus we pray. Amen.