**Sermon 4th May 2023 (SC). Trinity Sunday**

**2 Corinthians 13:11-14**

Well friends, I don’t normally endorse this, but in my sermon today, I need you to be talkative. I need you to be chatty. You see, I want to open with a few fun questions, and I’m going to give you 30 seconds or so to confer with your neighbour before we have some feedback.

So here is the first question: What is the difference between being good and doing good?

Does doing good mean you are good? *Does doing good things make you a good person?*

And if you are good, will you do good? *Will a good person necessarily do good things?*

Now, let’s take things up a gear. Let us apply something of this to God – Is God good because he does good, or, does He do good because he is good?

Well, for those of you with brain-space sufficient to unravel that puzzle, enjoy that teaser, for the rest of us, welcome to Trinity Sunday.

For those of us unfamiliar with Church life, Trinity Sunday is a day set aside in the Church’s yearly calendar to talk about, and to teach, who we believe God is. Hence the title: *Trinity Sunday.* Now you might say, “don’t we talk about God every Sunday?” and my answer is, “Yes! I really hope so.” But I think the difference about today, is that we address the question, what does it mean to say that God is Father, Son and Holy Spirit?

Now to make our attempt at answering this question, we are going to turn in our Bibles to the end of St Paul’s second letter to the church in Corinth. 2 Corinthians 13:14. Now Paul had written to this Church in Greece once before, in about the year 55AD. And I think it is fair to say, that his letter hadn’t been wholly well-received. 1 Corinthians is a book in the New Testament that feels a bit like a sharp email from your line-manager, with a curt sign-off. Like a good annual appraisal, Paul talks about the things the church does well, but also, highlights the areas where they need to improve. You see Paul loved the church in Corinth, but he had a lot of challenging things to say to them, and they struggled with that. And now, in this second letter, a year later, Paul is defending his ministry from celebrity pastors that have impressed this worshipping community with their showmanship. And so Paul’s second letter has a very different tone, earnest, pained, appealing to the strength of their friendship. And at the end of that letter, Paul closes with an extraordinary sign-off:

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

And here we come back to my opening questions about “being” and “doing.” You see, in Paul’s closing statement here in 2 Corinthians 13:14, Paul is telling us something profound about God’s *being* and *doing*, about who God *is* and what he *does*, about his identity and his activity.

Let’s think about this blessing line by line:

***May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ*.** Well, where else in this letter does Paul talk about the grace of Jesus Christ? Back in 2 Corinthians 8:9

*For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that thought he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich.*

***The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ*** *is* that he became one of us to rescue us.

But what about the second line: ***And the love of God.*** Well, back in chapter 5:9, Paul talks about God’s love as the divine desire to reconcile all things to himself.

*That is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation.*

***The Love of God*** is the divine love that seeks to reconcile and not reject the world.

And finally, ***And the fellowship of the Holy Spirit.*** Well, earlier in the letter in 1:22, Paul tells us, the Spirit is the guarantee God gives that we belong to him.

*He anointed us, set his seal of ownership upon us, and put his Spirit in our hearts as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come.*

***The fellowship of the Holy Spirit,***is the assurance that we belong to God.

***So the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,***

Jesus became one of us to rescue us.

***The Love of God,***

God wished to reconcile not reject the world.

***The fellowship of the Holy Spirit***

The Spirit assures us that we belong to him.

Now, there are times in church life when it is right to talk about challenge. There are times in church life when it is right to confront our need for change. There are times when we need to reflect on what is wrong within ourselves and in our culture. But today, with the words of the grace, we speak over one another the being and doing of God, we proclaim over the church, the identity and activity of God.

Today is a day to be reminded that:

* Jesus became one of us to rescue us
* God wished to reconcile not reject the world
* The Spirit assures us we belong to Him.

So may the being and doing of God inspire you when we take Holy Communion shortly.

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you when you settle down at your desk tomorrow. May the love of God be with you in your interaction with other people this week.

And in those quiet moments of private meditation, may the Spirit assure you that you belong to him. Amen.