

## Living in the Triune Gift

by Linda Rex

**June 4, 2023, Holy Trinity / After Pentecost**—As we move on into the season beyond Pentecost, we begin to consider what it means that we participate and live in the Triune gift given to us in Jesus and the Spirit. What does it mean that we are included in God's life and love, and are called together into community?

The Lord Jesus Christ gave his disciples instructions before he ascended, telling them to live out the implications of his ascended life by making disciples, baptizing and teaching them wherever they went (Matthew 28:16-20). His instructions to them were predicated on the reality that he had received all authority in heaven and on earth from his Father in the Spirit, and he would be going with them through whatever they might face, no matter the circumstances.

As the early churches were formed and began to gather, those who were not familiar with Jewish regulations regarding fellowship joined with those who had customarily followed certain Jewish customs and regulations throughout their lives. And the Roman culture of the day venerated social status, income level, and materialism—similar to our culture today. In the midst of these contrasting influences and expectations, the Corinth church was in disarray, caught up in unChristlike behaviors and practices, and being led astray by false teachers. The apostle Paul lovingly sought to call them back to the grace, love, and unity which was theirs in Jesus Christ.

As he closed his letter to the members at Corinth, Paul began to write in deep affection with his own hand the closing benediction (2 Cor 13:11-13). Using the common greeting of “farewell,” he encouraged them to “put things in order.” The NIV and ESV say “aim for full restoration” or “strive for full restoration,” while the NASB says “be made complete.” He wanted them to put aside their differences and all of the false identities they were embracing, and simply be who God said they were—his beloved children, bound together by the Spirit in love and grace.

Paul went on to encourage his beloved spiritual brothers and sisters to be “likeminded” and to “live in peace.” What was on the apostle's heart was the unity of the body of Christ being made manifest in the way that they treated one another. He longed for them to drop the societal and cultural exclusivism and live in truly Christlike inclusive, caring, and sharing ways with one another. This call for unity and being of one mind and heart is reminiscent of Jesus' instruction to his disciples before he went to the cross. He told them to love one another, and in this way prove to others that they were his disciples (John 15:7-11). In doing so, he said, they would rejoice. This resonates with Paul's instructions to the members at Corinth, for he too tells them to rejoice in the midst of their unity and likemindedness in the Spirit.

And this is the key. It is impossible for us to have this kind of unity and harmony apart from the living presence of God himself through Jesus in the Spirit. It is the grace of Jesus, the love of God, and fellowship of the Holy Spirit we are living in the midst of and participating in when we join together as one body, the body of Christ. Our unity of mind and heart is a gift from the Holy Spirit. This is where our joy comes from, a gift of the divine joy God has in his own unity and love as Father and Son in the Spirit. We receive God's Spirit and joyfully participate in the grace offered to us in Jesus as an expression of our Father's love, fellowshiping with God and man in peace and harmony.

When we try to work this up ourselves, we find that we are unable to avoid the differences which cause division within the body of Christ. When we seek to follow what is culturally comfortable and what we've grown up doing all our lives, we discover that these things create differences rather than unity. When we allow our individualism to reign, we lose our mutual personhood, for

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those relationships which are meant to harmonize together become fractured and broken. Our best efforts at unity are fragile and at times even infectious. We desperately need the grace of Jesus, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Spirit to make us one, heal our divisions, and unify us. May we live in the blessing of God's gift in Christ by the Spirit—and receive from our loving Triune Lord, the unity, harmony, peace he always meant for us to enjoy, and learn to share it with others. May we receive the Triune gift and live within it in gratitude and praise.

*Dear God, thank you for including us in your life and love, for the grace offered to us through your Son because of your faithful, bountiful love, Father, in the wondrous fellowship and joy of your Holy Spirit. Enable us to receive all that you have for us, to live in the truth of who we are as your beloved children, in the unity and harmony and peace you always meant for us to enjoy, through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.*

*“Finally, brothers and sisters, farewell. Put things in order, listen to my appeal, agree with one another, live in peace; and the God of love and peace will be with you. Greet one another with a holy kiss. All the saints greet you. The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with all of you.” 2 Cor 13:11-13 NRSV*