

Sermon Text: 2 Corinthians 13:11-14

Sermon Theme: The one True God brings Gifts

1. The love of the Father 2. The grace of Christ 3. The Fellowship of the Spirit who works faith in us

¹¹ Finally, brothers, good-by. Aim for perfection, listen to my appeal, be of one mind, live in peace. And the God of love and peace will be with you.

¹² Greet one another with a holy kiss. ¹³ All the saints send their greetings.

¹⁴ May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

The Athanasian Creed is pretty long isn't it? It's much longer than the Apostles' Creed or the Nicene Creed. Maybe you have wondered why. Just two weeks ago someone asked me why there were three Creeds and not one and why each of the Creeds is a different length.

The answer to this question of three creeds is that the three creeds were written at three different times in the history of the church in order to defend and confess what we believe. The Apostle's Creed was written to reflect and confess the teachings of the apostles that were Jesus' very own teachings. We don't know who actually put the pen to the paper to write this Creed, but it was accepted as a correct confession of the faith in the 2nd century and has been used by the Christian church as a simple, yet true, statement of belief ever since.

The Nicene Creed was written during the fourth century as the church began to split apart over false doctrine. There was disagreement in the church on whether Jesus was truly the Son of God our Savior. The Roman Emperor Constantine called a council at Nicaea and another about 50 years later in Constantinople, to discuss what the true teachings of Bible were about the Christ. Out of these two councils came a more detailed statement of faith regarding God and especially Jesus called the Nicene Creed. We use the Nicene Creed as the confession of faith during our preparation for communion during communion Sundays.

The last creed, the Athanasian Creed, was written in the 6th century. We should really use the Athanasian Creed every week because it is a very specific, very detailed confession of faith about the Triune God. You may have read in the bulletin this morning that the Athanasian Creed is so detailed because it was written to deal with two very large false teachings of a group called the Arians. They taught that Jesus and the Holy Spirit were not True God and that Jesus could not be True God and True Man. It is named after Athanasius who defended the teachings of the Bible against these false teachers.

While this is the longest and most detailed of the Creeds, it is also the one that needs to be studied because of the depth of doctrine. We use this confession once a year, to remind ourselves that the Bible teaches that God is three persons, yet one God, and this is what we believe and confess.

Even though the Creeds have different names and lengths, they are not three different statements of faith. What we confess in each of the creeds is the same. We are confessing the truths of the Bible that we have a God; Father, Son and Holy Spirit who loves us and saves us.

This doctrine of our three-in-one God is one of the most difficult for us to understand. Our human minds like to have it one way or the other. A thing cannot be one and three at the same time. Only God can call himself singular and plural at the same time and not be contradictory, because he is God.

We see evidence of this God being one all over the Bible. The prophets of the Old Testament, apostles of the New Testament and even Jesus used words like God and Lord to speak about God as one God. Unlike, the other nations who had many gods of many different things, the true God is one god. God is not many, but one.

We also see evidence of the three persons of God. In our readings for today we see God call refer to the persons of God. We hear those words from Matthew 28, **in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit**, and we understand that these persons of God are very real, they are separate but equal in all they do.

We talk about three persons, yet one God because that is how God reveals himself in his Word. There is so much about God that is so deep that even if we studied it for our whole lives, we would never be able to understand it all. Yet, what God does reveal to us we can certainly grasp and benefit from.

Imagine having to explain a computer or a car to someone. There is a lot about that computer that we do not understand. We may not understand how the system processes or how the computer makes sense of all the data, but just because we don't understand it doesn't mean that the computer is worthless to us. There are things about the computer that we can and do grasp and make use of. We can power the computer on and surf the net, open our e-mail, logon to our facebook page, we can communicate with people over hundreds and thousands of

miles, and play all sorts of fun games. Even if we don't understand everything about a computer, there are still parts and pieces that you can know, grasp and make use of for your benefit.

God does not speak to us in a way that is far above the heights of the mountains, instead, he speaks to us in the way that we might be able to grasp the things that we need to know about him in a way that will be to our benefit. God reveals himself in His Word as the God of love, the Triune God who gives good gifts. He is the Father of grace, the Savior of love and the Spirit of faith.

Our sermon text for this morning is one of the blessings that we often use to show us the love and mercy of our God. **the God of love and peace will be with you. ¹⁴ May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.**

We worship, praise, and confess God the Father, the Father of love. It is God the Father who made the first promise to Adam and Eve that a Savior would come to take away their sins. It is Jesus who speaks about the Father's love that sent him to this world to redeem people from their sin. It is the Father of love who provides for us every day and protects us from danger both physical and spiritual.

We worship, praise, and confess God the Son, the Son of grace, our Savior, Jesus Christ. Jesus showed us love that we did not deserve because we are all sinners. Because we are sinners, Jesus should have turned his back on us and saved someone who is more deserving. But, the same love and forgiveness that Jesus showed to the Pharisees and chief priest when he asked God to forgive them, the same love and forgiveness he showed Peter, is the same love and forgiveness that Jesus shows to us in forgiving our sins and loving us enough to give us the gift of heaven.

We worship, praise, and confess God the Holy Spirit, who together with Father and the Son works to bring us to faith and keep us in that faith. Have you ever thought about the amazing work the Holy Spirit has done for you in bringing you to faith? I knew an old pastor once who said he had had two miracles in his life. One that God had seen fit to give him life and the second that he had worked saving faith in his heart.

This faith in Christ is a miracle, a miracle that is worked in the heart of anyone who believes, by the Holy Spirit. Without the Holy Spirit, no one can believe, but with the Holy Spirit we are God's children by the faith he works.

What great gifts God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit has given to us. But even though Paul lists these gifts for each of the person of God, we know that these gifts are interchangeable. The same gifts are given by all the persons of God. The love of God is also the love of the Savior and the Holy Spirit. The grace of Jesus in walking to the cross is also the grace of God the Father in choosing us to be his own from eternity. It is the grace of the Holy Spirit who works saving faith in Jesus in our undeserving hearts. And the Father and the Son, send us the Holy Spirit to create and strengthen that faith in our hearts.

What God has told us about himself is so simple. He works to save us. God the Father loves us enough to make the plan to save us, God the Son carried out God's plan and the Holy Spirit makes that salvation ours by the faith he works in our hearts. This is such a simple message but we can certainly complicate what God says about himself can't we? Instead of holding to this Gospel message of God's grace and mercy in the ways that he describes himself, we want to try to explain God in our own terms. And so often when we go away from Scripture, we get our God all wrong.

If we do not focus on the way God reveals himself in the Bible, we will quickly lose the love of the Father to save sinners and we will replace him with a happy grandfather god who gives out blessings to the good and stomps on the bad. Instead thanking and praising God for his wonderful love shown in Jesus, we will only want to obey God so that we won't get punished.

If we do not continue to search the Scripture, we will lose the amazing grace of our Savior, Jesus shown to undeserving sinners like you and me, in his suffering and death. We will replace it with a salvation that we have to earn by our own works, or worse we will call it a salvation that comes to anyone, even those who do not repent of their sins and who do not believe.

If we do not hold to the way that God speaks about himself, we can quickly take the miraculous working of faith that the Holy Spirit does in us and we will try to put it into our own hands as something we do for ourselves, or a good choice we make in our life. The work of the Holy Spirit is so much more than positive change or positive living, it is by this faith in Jesus, worked by the Spirit that we are saved.

The Creeds we confess and hold to are very important. They refocus us every week on our God, who he is and what he has done to save us from our sin. They show us our one God, the Father of love, the Son of grace and the Spirit that works faith in us. Amen