

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ!

Our God is relational, God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit. Three persons, but one God. Each person of the Trinity is distinct, and God reveals himself to us in scripture, and it is through Jesus that God reveals himself to us inviting us to share his love, to share the abundant life.

We confess our belief in God in the words of our Creeds, the Apostles' Creed and the Nicene Creed. In our creeds we state what we as Christians believe, teach and confess.

Our relational God calls us through the Holy Spirit into the abundant life with him. And at the end of Matthew's gospel, Jesus is with his disciples, Jesus died, buried, and raised by God the Father, and now we who are baptized in the name of our God, Father Son and Holy Spirit, are his own. It is truly the grace of God. But there's no coercion or force involved, we can always say "no."

Now as you probably remember, Jesus and his disciples were to go first to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, Jesus' mission was to begin with his own people, the Jews. Yet Jesus coming into contact with others, a Roman centurion, a Samaritan woman he encounters at a well, a Syrophenician woman, a Samaritan leper, marveled at their faith.

And Jesus tells his disciples "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. God therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

Now think of it this way sisters and brothers, God the Father Son, and Holy Spirit love eternally, and now our God calls everyone to that life and that love. So the questions is, how do you respond to God's saving work in Jesus Christ? How do you respond to the prompting, the urging, of the Holy Spirit? How do you respond to Jesus' explicit command to go make disciples? Do you worship or doubt? Do you hesitate to commit, to follow? Or do you invite others even now to share God's life and love? Who here doesn't want everyone to have what you yourself has received of God's grace?

How can we not come to hear God's Word, to receive him in Holy Communion? How can we not listen to him, how can we not meditate on his Word?

I remember when I was dating Cynthia back in high school then in college. I couldn't wait to be with her, it's a wonder I graduated given how much she was on my mind and my lessons went to the background. I couldn't stop thinking of her, wanting to be with her. She captured my heart and that's all there was, all there is to it.

In an even more intimate manner the Holy Spirit gifted me with faith and when I began to realize how much God loves me and treasures me and will never leave me, it changed me.

In this 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary year of the Reformation, Martin Luther came to my mind. He suffered from anxiety, fear of not being able to live up to God's expectations, depression, grief (especially after his little girl died at a young age) and he was excommunicated and sentenced to death. Through it all, Luther was constantly in prayer, constantly read and meditated on the Word of God, worshipped and preached, and through all of it would say: "But I am baptized. I am God's child. Christ Jesus has died and risen that I may be His!"

You and I are Christ's, you and I have received the Holy Spirit, you and I are baptized people of faith and we come to the altar with empty hands to receive from God as he shares his body and blood with us. You and I are disciples and our lives should be lives of thanksgiving and praise to our God who has given us abundant life. And as we go through the rest of our lives in this time and place, we need to share what we have received.

AMEN