

“I can name that tune in five notes. I can name that tune in three notes. I can name that tune in two notes. Name that tune.” That was the back and forth of contestants on the TV game show *Name That Tune*. Based only on the clues read by the host, contestants would challenge each other to see how few of notes they could name the tune in. It seems improbable that from a whole catalog of music someone could name a specific piece of music given only a couple of notes. But contestants on the show came well prepared for naming any song.

This morning we’re not going to play name that tune. Instead we’re going to talk about something much more important but also much more mysterious. You’ve heard about it but understand it only a little. Your knowledge will always be limited. Yet it’s one of the most important things you could ever know. Something that important for your soul and yet you’ll never be able to fully understand; seems almost more like a cruel joke than life saving teaching.

As Paul finishes his second letter to the Corinthians read as the second lesson, he leaves the most complete formula regarding God that’s in the Bible. They’re words you’ve come to know. Yet the more you look at them the more you maybe realize you don’t know. Given what Paul writes we’re going to learn more about our God...

The Trinity in three words

Grace

Love

Fellowship

Two times in the Bible the Trinity shows up as all three persons at one time, Jesus’ baptism and his transfiguration. Each time the Father speaks from heaven and the Holy Spirit descends looking like a dove. But in each case Jesus is central. So as Paul talks here about God Jesus is again central and so is his grace. Grace is that undeserved love God gives to all sinners as a gift. Grace is the attribute of Jesus that caused him to come to earth long before any human could ever do anything about their sinful situation, and give himself as our Savior.

How the world understands grace is something completely different. Maybe even the way you’ve thought about grace is different. Grace can describe how a dancer moves across a stage. Grace can describe how someone receives criticism. But grace describing the unmerited and unearned good nature of God shown toward sinful human beings can turn people off. People complain grace makes life too easy or unfair. God’s favor has to be earned people think. How totally unfair when all the awful things others have done to you can be overlooked because of grace. That’s letting them off the hook. It’s too easy to let myself off the hook and easily forgive sin, almost sweeping it under the rug. Seems like a great deal, but is grace a little too cheap?

Grace was anything but cheap or easy. Jesus gives grace a face, he puts it into action. He’s Lord over all and God in the flesh. He’s the Christ, the Savior of the world, the promised Messiah. He came to complete everything needed to accomplish saving a world full of sinners. Nothing is left undone. It wasn’t easy and it didn’t come cheap. Grace led Jesus to give his life for you and the whole world. Grace is so wonderful and so amazing that you only need hear the message to believe it. Jesus doesn’t force it on you, he simply extends his grace to us. He declares us to be free and clear of our sins. To reject that seems foolish. It might seem easy, unfair even, but it’s true none the less.

John Lennon was once asked to write a simple song with a simple message. He came up with *All You Need is Love*. Simply put, love is everything. That message still resonates with people. But what kind of love? Is it worldly love built only on emotions? A charged kind of love that attracts two people together? When Paul used love to describe God the Father of the Trinity neither of those ideas for love were enough. God is love on a whole other level. His love chooses to love someone even though that someone might not be deserving of the love and may not be able to show love back. This is effective kind of love, its love that comes from the divine.

We love someone usually when there’s a reasonable expectation they’ll love us back. Human love is based largely on the other person. “I love her looks. I love the way he makes me feel.” But those factors come and go. What if one day her looks aren’t as attractive? Can you still say you love her? What if he makes you feel horrible one day instead of loved? Can you still love him then? Human love so often falls short of what God the Father demonstrates to us.

Read the first chapter of Genesis as we did for the first lesson and you see the Father’s love. In this true recap of those first days of this planet, we see just what level God’s love is on. He took his time in fashioning a perfect world. At just the right time he created humans and gave them the entire world to enjoy. God took pleasure in giving them richness and variety. This expression of love is in your life still today. Even if you suffer, God’s love is still visible. Clearest of all is when he sent Jesus. God’s love in Jesus never fails and never changes. It won’t go up or down or be lost due to your sinful actions towards God. That kind of love forgives and fills you with hope moving forward. By God’s love you continue to be his own.

Throughout the letter to the Corinthians Paul has admonished them for certain sins still being allowed among them. Then he shares his plans for a trip to see them. When he arrives he'll use his authority as an apostle if necessary. But he would much rather build them up. He would much rather work on their fellowship. That describes what the Holy Spirit brings. Fellowship is a relationship, a sharing enjoyed when people of like mind gather together. The Holy Spirit makes fellowship by the gospel, bringing people to faith in Christ. People then have a right relationship with God. The gospel also brings people into a relationship, a fellowship, with other people. This is the fellowship among Christians we enjoy.

Personal agendas threaten this fellowship. Cliques and gossip threaten it too. Where Christians have gathered into a fellowship nothing should tear them apart. Separation into factions opposed to each other is not God-pleasing. Might that happen in our midst? Might a decision on how we worship split us apart? Could discussions over the budget cause people to separate into opposing groups? Might the direction of our school cause division? Are we galvanized together as a unified whole or are there potential for divisions among us?

Rather than splinter Paul seeks a renewal of commitment to fellowship. A change in behavior is needed. **"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."** Paul is calling them and us to repentance. It's not about working for perfection but rather to be restored to remember the perfection Christ Jesus has earned for you. Be of one mind thinking always about the freedom from sin we have in Jesus. We have no right to fellowship with the Trinity. The Holy Spirit grants unity in a loving peaceful relationship with him by faith based on the removal of sin and guilt.

Speaking about fellowship Martin Luther once said, **"Although they may be a thousand miles apart in body, they are yet an assembly in spirit because each one preaches, believes, hopes, loves, and lives like the other."** Christians share a common faith which goes beyond walls and borders. It's a common confession like what we'll confess in mere moments. As we speak listen to your fellow brothers and sisters. Your voices are raised with saints from before. We are Christians united in a fellowship of belief, brought together by the Holy Spirit, through the good news of sins forgiven in Christ.

Congratulations if you were a wizard at playing *Name that Tune*. Your music knowledge is impressive if you can name any tune in fewer than five notes. This morning hopefully you can name the Trinity in three words. Grace, love, and fellowship. These are just three words describing what is indescribable. These three words give us some insight into this Triune God we worship. **"The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ...the love of God...the fellowship of the Holy Spirit."** We may not understand, but today we do appreciate it more.