

FIRST SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

Hymns: 252, 245, 473, 246

The INTROIT

(Ps. 13:5,6,1)

P: O Lord, I have trusted in Thy mercy;

C: my heart shall rejoice in Thy salvation.

P: I will sing unto the Lord;

C: because He hath dealt bountifully with me.

P: How long wilt Thou forget me, O Lord?

C: How long wilt Thou hide Thy face from me?

The COLLECT

O God, the Strength of all them that put their trust in Thee, mercifully accept our prayers; and because through the weakness of our mortal nature we can do no good thing without Thee, grant us the help of Thy grace that in keeping Thy commandments we may please Thee both in will and deed; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end.

The FIRST LESSON

Jeremiah 9:23-24 (NKJV)

Thus says the LORD: "Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, Let not the mighty man glory in his might, Nor let the rich man glory in his riches; But let him who glories glory in this, That he understands and knows Me, That I am the LORD, exercising lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth. For in these I delight," says the LORD.

The GRADUAL

(Ps.41:4,1; 5:1)

P: Blessed art Thou, O Lord, who beholdest the deep:

C: and who dwellest between the cherubim.

P: Blessed art Thou, O Lord, in the firmament of heaven:

C: and greatly to be praised forever. Hallelujah! Hallelujah!

P: Blessed art Thou, O Lord God of our fathers:

C: and greatly to be praised and glorified forever. Hallelujah!

The EPISTLE

1 John 4:16-21 (NKJV)

God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God in him. Love has been perfected among us in this: that we may have boldness in the day of judgment; because as He is, so are we in this world. There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love. We love Him because He first loved us. If someone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen? And this commandment we have from Him: that he who loves God must love his brother also.

P: Hallelujah! O Lord, deal with Thy servant according unto Thy mercy and teach me Thy statutes. I am Thy servant, give me understanding:

C: that I may know Thy testimonies. Hallelujah!

The HOLY GOSPEL

St. Luke 16:19-31 (NKJV)

There was a certain rich man who was clothed in purple and fine linen and fared sumptuously every day. But there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, full of sores, who was laid at his gate, desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table. Moreover the dogs came and licked his sores.

So it was that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels to Abraham's bosom. The rich man also died and was buried. And being in torments in Hades, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. Then he cried and said, "Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame."

But Abraham said, "Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things; but now he is comforted and you are tormented. And besides all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed, so that those who want to pass from here to you cannot, nor can those from there pass to us."

Then he said, "I beg you therefore, father, that you would send him to my father's house, for I have five brothers, that he may testify to them, lest they also come to this place of torment."

Abraham said to him, "They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them."

And he said, "No, father Abraham; but if one goes to them from the dead, they will repent."

But he said to him, "If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rise from the dead."

1 John 4:16-2

16. And we have known and have believed the love which has God in us. God love is and the *one* remaining in the love in God remains and God in him.
 17. In this has been completed (finished) the love among us, that frankness (boldness) we should have in the day of the judgment that just as that one (He) is also (even so) we are in the world this.
 18. Fear is not in the love but the complete love out throws the fear, because the fear punishment has, but the fearing, not having been completed in the love.
 19. We love Him because He first loved us.
 20. If anyone should say, "I love God" and the brother of him he should hate, a liar is he, for he loves not the brother of him which he has seen (observed). God, which he has not seen, how is he able to love?
 21. And this the precept (command) we have from Him: that the *one* loving God should love also the brother of him.
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1 John 4:16-21 — "Love Is"

INTRODUCTION

- I. LOVE IS
- II. THE LOVE AMONG US
- III. FEAR IS NOT IN THE LOVE

CONCLUSION

1 John 4:16-21 — “Love Is”

Grace, mercy, and peace to you all from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

The sermon text is the Epistle reading appointed for the First Sunday after Trinity, 1 John 4:16-21:

God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God in him. Love has been perfected among us in this: that we may have boldness in the day of judgment; because as He is, so are we in this world. There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love. We love Him because He first loved us. If someone says, “I love God,” and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen? And this commandment we have from Him: that he who loves God must love his brother also.

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

INTRODUCTION

The Greek text has a very different sound to it than our English translations. This is true for all of the New Testament Koine, but especially for St. John. John is the last of the apostles. He is writing from the perspective of the last remaining apostle who walked with Jesus during His ministry. John actually sounds funny to us because that which he writes is not ordinary. Actually what John writes is completely extraordinary and even foreign to our ears. We are accustomed to hearing the language of the world. What John writes is extraterrestrial. It is not of this world. It is from the outer-limits, even from beyond the outer limits. Yet what John writes is what we must know. What John writes is what we do know, in Christ.

I. LOVE IS

In an attempt to capture what John has recorded, I wish to read today’s text in a direct translation. It is recorded also at the end of today’s bulletin.

16. And we have known and have believed the love which has God in us. God love is and the *one* remaining in the love in God remains and God in him.
17. In this has been completed (finished) the love among us, that frankness (boldness) we should have in the day of the judgment that just as that one (He) is also (even so) we are in the world this.
18. Fear is not in the love but the complete love out throws the fear, because the fear punishment has, but the fearing, not having been completed in the love.
19. We love Him because He first loved us.
20. If anyone should say, “I love God” and the brother of him he should hate, a liar is he, for he loves not the brother of him which he has seen (observed). God, which he has not seen, how is he able to love?
21. And this the precept (command) we have from Him: that the *one* loving God should love

also the brother of him.

Perhaps the first observed difference is the unusual way in which St. John speaks of love. While our translations say, “**God is love,**” John says “**God love is.**” John does not allow any separation between God and love. In this sentence John does not speak of love in the same way as he does throughout the rest of our text. For in this sentence he does not use the direct article. Throughout the rest of the text he refers to “**the love.**” But in this sentence he simply says “**Love.**” “**God Love Is.**”

The God that John preaches cannot be known apart from Love. God Love Is.

Verse 16 begins with this very special declaration: “**And we have known and have believed the love which has God in us.**” This is rather different than our translations which say, “**And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us.**” or “**the love that God has for us.**” John seems to be saying something much more profound than our translators carry through in our translations. Listen to it again in the context in which John writes:

**And we have known and have believed the love which has God in us.
God love is and the *one* remaining in the love in God remains and God in him.**

The apostle is teaching the Holy Communion of love. “**God in us.**” Notice that this is not “**God in you.**” St. John is not teaching the false love that most Christians know and believe. This is not something that is “**between me and God.**” John says, “**And WE have known and have believed the love which has God in US.**” This is body of Christ language. This is the Holy Communion into which we all have been baptized. This is the love that exists in us as the body of Christ. This is God’s presence among us. This is Immanuel, with us God, of whom we joyously sing at ChristMass. This is Immanuel, with us God, who gives Himself to us and for us with the bread and the wine. This is Immanuel who has established the New Testament in His blood for us all to receive for the forgiveness of our sins and renewal in the life that is in the Communion of His blood. This is *God in us*. This is the love which makes us worthy communicants of the unity of the body of Christ and of the life that is in Christ’s blood. This is the love that makes us one with God and thereby one with each other. This love is the one who came from heaven to be born of the virgin and to tabernacle among us and to suffer and die in our stead and to rise again in the victory that He won for us and to ascend to the judgment seat to intercede for us and to rule on our behalf.

God love is, and the one remaining in the love in God remains and God in him. This is the point where it becomes individualistic. There is no individualism in the body of Christ, in the love which has God in us. Individualism exists only when our selfish and idolatrous choices lead us to separate ourselves from the love that has God in us so that we choose and seek after a love that is in me. Such love always fails, for such love does not remain in God. God Love Is. When we forget this eternal fact, we forget who God Is and we look for Him and His love in ourselves and in our actions and in our believing. We turn it upside down and inside out. God is not in our believing and in our love. Our believing is in God and His love.

II. THE LOVE AMONG US

In this has been completed (finished) the love among us, that frankness (boldness) we should have in the day of the judgment that just as

that one (He) is also (even so) we are in the world this.

We REALLY need to hear this. **“In this has been completed the love among us.”**

God has completed the love among us. It is an accomplished fact. We do not need to strive to be loving. We do not need to hear sermons that teach us how to be more loving and kind and caring. God has already fulfilled this among us.

THIS is what we need to hear. God Love IS! The one remaining in the love in God remains and God in him!

Where do we find this? Where do we hear this? St. Paul wrote to the Corinthians,

The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? For we being many are one bread, and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread. (1 Cor 10:16-17)

St. John declares: **“In this has been completed the love among us.”**

Do you want to know the love of God in your life? Then listen to what God declares to you. Listen to the one and only place on earth where the love exists for us. The Love that we crave and desperately need has been completed among us. Jesus is here for us and among us in the bread and the wine. His body is present as we gather in His name and eat of the bread of blessing. The love of God is poured out for us in the cup of blessing of which God has made us communicants through Baptism. He has joined us as one in Christ. We do not need to look for it. We do not need to try to make it happen in our lives. God has completed it among us! It is finished!

III. FEAR IS NOT IN THE LOVE

We are afraid to take God at His Word. We are afraid that the person we see in the mirror is the person that we really are. This is why St. John directs us away from what we know of ourselves to that we have known and believed, the Love which has God in us. This is why St. John directs us away from our love to the love that is completed among us. He directs us from whatever poor demonstrations of love that we produce to the love that has been completed among us in the Holy Communion. Then, as the dear apostle instructs us:

Fear is not in the love but the complete love out throws the fear!

When we come to the table of the LORD to partake of the perfect love of God, the perfect or complete love out throws the fear. Whatever fears we have are washed away by the blood of Jesus poured out for us to drink as one body. Whatever fears of rejection that we have are swallowed up and done away with as we partake of the one cup and of the one bread. In the Holy Communion God casts away from His body any fear that any of us have on account of our sinfulness and our personal unworthiness. God has baptized us into the name of the Holy Communion of the Holy Trinity. God love is. This is all that we find in His Holy Communion. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are completely One, and baptized into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit we are completely One in Him.

Fear is not in the love but the complete love out throws the fear!

Amen! This the proper and holy response. Amen! We have known it and have believed it because God has completed the faith for us and has washed us in it with the holy water of Baptism. He has washed away our guilty conscience so that as St. John instructs us:

In this has been completed (finished) the love among us, that frankness (boldness) we should have in the day of the judgment that just as that one (He) is also (even so) we are in the world this. Fear is not in the love but the complete love out throws the fear, because the fear punishment has, but the fearing, not having been completed in the love.

This is how we are to approach the Holy Communion: in the complete confidence of the completed love among us. God is the one who is worthy. He has poured out His worthiness to us in Baptism in connection with His own holy name, into which we have been baptized. His worthiness is poured out to us again and again with the blood of Jesus, which He commands that we receive in the cup of the New Testament for our forgiveness. This is the worthiness by which we eat and drink. The worthiness is in the blood in which we have been made communicants! Christ is our worthiness. He is the completed love who cried out from the cross, It IS Complete!

Where in this remains any room for fear?

CONCLUSION

This is why St. Paul admonishes that a man, that is the head of the household, should examine himself to be certain that he is discerning the body. When the fathers rightly discern the body, that is, when the fathers have carefully examined themselves and their households to be certain that they are truly in the Holy Communion of God where the means of grace are administered purely and without adulteration or obfuscation, where they are not being conjoined to others who obfuscate the means of grace, absolute frankness and confidence exists and all fear is driven out. It is only on account of the obfuscation of compromise that people have fear in approaching the God who completes His love in His body. It is only because we approach God's holiness with the uncertainty of our own bodies that we approach with fear. For our bodies are all corrupted by our own thoughts, words, and deeds. It is only the completed love of God that enables us to approach His holiness in confidence and without fear. This is why we are forbidden to remain in communions in which obfuscation is tolerated. God love is. He wants us to know and believe the love which has God in us. He does not want us to look to our own love or to our own works. Rather, He wants us to know His love that He works and completes among us. Then, even as He first loved us, we also love Him, and in Him we love one another. This is the love that He has completed among us. In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

The peace of God that surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus forever. Amen.