



June 8

Grace and Peace from our triune God, the three in one...

Pentecost is one of my favorite Sundays in the whole church calendar. It is one of the few days where we get to talk about the mysterious third person of our triune God, the three in one: that being the Holy Spirit. We have the Holy Spirit front and center in our reading from Acts as the Spirit enters the house where the apostles were like a violent wind, filling them while tongues of fire danced on their heads, and giving them the ability to speak in other languages. Thus began the ministry of the Apostles empowered by the Holy Spirit to proclaim the good news of Christ's death and resurrection, saving us from sin and death. However, spreading the Gospel wasn't always easy.

Paul's letter to the Galatians gives us some insight to a widespread problem in the early church: the division between Gentile and Jewish believers. Some of you may remember a couple of years ago when we read through Paul's letter to the Romans and saw a very similar issue come up. The key issue for both the Romans and Galatians is that many of the followers of Christ who were culturally or ethnically Jewish felt that it was necessary for all believers to follow the Jewish laws, and they took issue when the Gentile Christians weren't doing so. Paul saw this division in the Church of Galatia and likely heard about it happening in the Church of Rome and wrote to them.

We still have this problem in our own time. Many Christians in the world make judgements towards other Christians. Lines are drawn in the sand. If that person behaves in a way that I don't approve of or agree with, they don't belong. We live in a society that seems to be drowning in divisiveness, anger, and hatred. We have lost sight of seeing the image of God in our neighbors.

In both letters, Paul reminds the communities that following the laws of the Old Testament to the letter is not what saves us from sin. In this, we too are reminded that there is something greater in the world that is constantly at work to unite each other in the love of God: the Holy Spirit that is present in each of our lives. The Spirit works through the proclaimed and enacted gospel to bring us into right relationship with God and one another through Christ. We are all adopted through the Holy Spirit as Children of God and siblings in Christ. We are no longer bound to sin and death. In our baptism, we are reminded of our adoption into God's family. A family where there is no requirements, nor rules, nor anything that can be done to stop God from loving you. It is a love that is for all people whether they are Gentile or Jew, Christian or not, baptized or not, and anything in between or beyond.

As you depart, remember the words that are proclaimed in baptism: "Child of God, you have been sealed by the Holy Spirit and marked with the cross of Christ forever."

Amen.

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