

(Joh 17:4-5 NIV) “4 I have brought you glory on earth by completing the work you gave me to do. 5 And now, Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began.”

This morning, I would like to begin this sermon by going back before anything created was, when there was God – Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Back then, to put it in human terms, did God need anything? Was God completely self-sufficient in Himself or did He need the creation, did He need us to be fulfilled?

Of course, the answer to these questions is a capital “NO”! God existed totally self-sufficient and content!

Fred Sanders, in the DEEP THINGS OF GOD, on page 62 says,

But God the Trinity is the end, the goal, the telos, the omega. In himself and without any reference to a created world or the plan of salvation, God is that being who exists as the triune love of the Father for the Son in the unity of the Spirit. The boundless life that God lives in himself, at home, within the happy land of the Trinity above all worlds, is perfect. It is complete, inexhaustibly full, and infinitely blessed.

When we read the news, there is something substantial, there is a who behind the news. When I joyfully read this morning that the Vancouver Canucks had won over the Boston Bruins on Saturday morning, there was somebody behind that news. If Boston and Vancouver had not played hockey Friday night and if Maxime Lapierre had not scored there would not have been any news. I would not have read anything on the subject! Their win was the news. They were the substance behind the news.

God is the substance of the good news, of the Gospel. He is behind the good news! We can say that He is the good news!

God has always existed. He has had no beginning. He will have no end. He is eternal. He has always existed in love, in His triune state of being. God is beyond what we can imagine. He has revealed Himself in Jesus Christ but He remains mysterious. He remains beyond human understanding. He remains above. God the Father has always been eternally the Father. The Son has always been eternally the Son. The Holy Spirit has always been the Holy Spirit throughout eternity.

Human words cannot capture the grandeur and infinity of God.

We know that God is love and in relationship because Jesus, the Eternal Son, has revealed Him to be so.

(Joh 14:9 NIV) “Jesus answered: "Don't you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'?"”

“1 ¶ In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, 2 but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe.” (Heb 1:1-2 NIV)

God was still God without the creation. He was still God without the firmament. In 1849 Fabrick W. Faber wrote the following hymn with words so true:

<p>Have mercy on us, God most high, Who lift our hearts to thee; Have mercy now, most merciful, Most Holy Trinity.</p> <p>When heaven and earth were yet unmade, When time was yet unknown, Thou, in thy bliss and majesty, Didst live and love alone.</p> <p>Thou wert not born; there was no fount From which thy Being flowed There is no end which thou canst reach For thou art simply God.</p>	<p>How wonderful creation is, The work thou didst bless; And O, what then must thou be like, Eternal Loveliness!</p> <p>Most ancient of all mysteries! Low at thy throne we lie; Have mercy now, most merciful, Most Holy Trinity.</p> <p>Frederick W. Faber, 1849</p>
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SUSANNA WESLEY (1738) the mother of John Wesley, wrote the following in her diary:

(H)e is being itself, and as such must necessarily be infinitely happy in the glorious perfections of his nature from everlasting to everlasting; and as he did not create, so neither did he redeem because he needed us; but he loved us because he loved us. (Idem p. 61 THE DEEP THINGS OF GOD)

In a commentary the epistle of Peter, Robert Leighton who lived from 1611-1684 wrote the following about 1st Peter 1:20,

Before there was time, or place, or any creature, God, the blessed Trinity, was in Himself, and as the Prophet speaks, inhabiting eternity, completely happy in Himself: but intending to manifest

and communicate His goodness, He gave being to the world, and to time with it; made all to set forth His goodness, and the most excellent of his creatures to contemplate and enjoy it

What does that tell us?

It tells us very clearly that God created all that we see out of the mystery of His love. EVERY THING!

It means that all that exists came out of the existence of God, out of His being, out of His free will, out of His decision, to create the enormity of the universe, you, I and all other people.

When we stop and think about it this awesome creation comes from a transcendent and supreme being who is one God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit!

When we bring it down to our individual lives, it means that you and I are a product, an expression of God mighty creative power of love. We are here because of love! God did not need us but he decided to create human beings in His image to share His awesome, His awe-inspiring life through His Son Jesus Christ. We are all here because of God's mercy and grace! God loves everyone!!!

Jesus was chosen before the foundation of the world to make this possible!

(1Pe 1:18-21 NIV) “18 For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, 19 but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect. 20 He was chosen before the creation of the world, but was revealed in these last times for your sake. 21 Through him you believe in God, who raised him from the dead and glorified him, and so your faith and hope are in God.”

As read these verses, (what we read in John 17:4-5 (NIV) “**4 I have brought you glory on earth by completing the work you gave me to do. 5 And now, Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began.**”) begin to make more sense. Jesus' glory before becoming a human being to redeem us was beyond words to describe!

We are here in God's presence because of His love, grace and mercy. These qualities are not apart from God. They cannot be separated from God. They are who He is in Himself.

When God begins to open our eyes about who He is in Himself: Father, Son and Holy Spirit, then the verses inspired many places in the Bible make more and more sense because they stem from Him. He is the source of these words. He is the Who, the One on which these words are and stand!!

(1Jo 4:18-19 NIV) “18 There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love. 19 We love because he first loved us.”

God is the source of everything that we are, all the talents that we have. We could not love if God had not given us the ability to love. All stems from God. God loves all created people!

The fact that people are in conflict, too often being brutal to one another, doesn't change God.

Adam and Eve chose death instead of choosing life. Their decision affected human beings until Jesus Christ came. This is important to understand! God did not create human beings to be miserable. We decided to be miserable in our rejection of God.

The consequence of sin is death, we are told in Romans. We became alienated to God and we became dead. Jesus came to give us life. No one can have life apart from Jesus Christ. Changes in human behaviour do not give life! I like the example given by Steve McVey in one of his books; that you can dress a corpse, and even if he looks nice, he still has no life! Being dead, we need to be resurrected. We needed a new life. That is what Christ came to give us.

Rom 5:12 tells us that when sin entered the world that death came to all men. We cannot avoid being dead when we are born. That was true before Jesus left heaven to come to us! When Jesus came everything changed! Let us read carefully a part of what Paul wrote in His epistles to the Romans:

(Ro 5:12-19 NIV) “12 Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned—

- This was a description of the state of man after the fall of Adam and Eve when the rejected life.

13 for before the law was given, sin was in the world. But sin is not taken into account when there is no law. 14 Nevertheless, death reigned from the time of Adam to the time of Moses, even over those who did not sin by breaking a command, as did Adam, who was a pattern of the one to come.

15 But the gift is not like the trespass. For if the many died by the trespass of the one man, how much more did God's grace and the gift that came by the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, overflow to the many!

- Paul begins to express the good news found in Christ!
- Adam, in that way, was a type of the man Jesus Christ – but in the opposite.
- Adam brought death; the gift of the Father and the gift of Jesus Christ brought life.
- That means, as we see elsewhere, that we are new creations in the man Jesus Christ, the Eternal Son having taken our very nature and redeeming it.
- There is nothing that you or I can do about this. It has been done for us as a gift.
- In Christ we died. In Christ, we rose again.
- Jesus undid Adam's death for all mankind.
- God has given it to us.

- What is our work in all of this?
- **(Joh 6:28-29 NIV) "28 ¶ Then they asked him, "What must we do to do the works God requires?"** Please note what Jesus did not say – He did not say you must keep the law better, you must live better, etc... This is what He said:
- **29 Jesus answered, "The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent."**

16 Again, the gift of God is not like the result of the one man's sin: The judgment followed one sin and brought condemnation, but the gift followed many trespasses and brought justification.

- Please look at these verses carefully.
- What did one man's sin bring?
- CONDEMNATION
- What gift did we receive from the Father in His Son?
- JUSTIFICATION
- Justification is a gift of God. There is nothing we can do to be justified in God. It is a gift. We stand right before God because of Jesus Christ!
- What is our work?
- To believe!
- Why is this work?
- Because we don't see it in our flesh! But it is still the reality!
- This is our new reality in Christ. We are justified by God – not by our actions or the way we feel.
- Christ has taken in Himself our infirmities and healed them.
- Christ is now our life. Our life is hidden in Him and it will be fully revealed at the time of the resurrection.

17 For if, by the trespass of the one man, death reigned through that one man, how much more will those who receive God's abundant provision of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ.

- Again, what is our responsibility once our eyes are open?
- We are to receive God's abundant grace and the gift of righteousness found in the one man Jesus Christ.
- Do we need to worry whether or not we are right before God?
- NO! It is a gift from God as we receive it.
- What can we do to earn this gift?
- NOTHING!!!!
- What do we receive?
- We receive God coming to live in us and that by this very act, we live in Him. That is called perichoresis or mutual indwelling!

18 Consequently, just as the result of one trespass was condemnation for all men, so also the result of one act of righteousness was justification that brings life for all men.

- We must remember that God does not need us but He has created us to enjoy the wonderful relationship God has within Himself through His Eternal Son, now both God and man by the Holy Spirit.
- The one act of righteousness of the Son who was in Himself righteous and who obeyed the Father perfectly throughout His earthly life represented all of mankind.
- Jesus, in the resurrection, made us alive and brought life to all men!
- Does God's grace offend us?
- God's grace tends to offend mankind!
- Who does He bring life to?
- TO ALL MEN! (To all those who receive this grace!)

19 For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous."

- What is our identity now – that of sinners or that of righteous men and women?
- Our identity is now found in Christ. It is no longer found in the flesh!
- We have God living in us! We are new creations!
- We were sinners in the past – dead in our transgressions. This is not the case anymore!
- We are alive.
- Does it mean that we will no longer struggle with sin?
- Sin is still in our fleshly body. Our bodies will be changed at the resurrection. Please read all of 1 Corinthians 15 if you have forgotten what that chapter says.
- **“And just as we have borne the likeness of the earthly man, so shall we bear the likeness of the man from heaven.” (1Co 15:49 NIV)**

This is our reality as we trust in the faithfulness of Jesus Christ.

God the Father wants us to keep our eyes on Jesus Christ and not on our fleshly bodies to overcome. . Our sins are defeated in Christ. Our death is defeated and gone in Christ. God tells us very clearly in His word that we have a new life which is hidden in Christ because Christ is our life.

As we go through the problems of this life, we need to focus on the love that God has for us. He loved us first and He still loves us. He is the one transforming us! He is the one who tells us to abide in Him! That is our work – to believe. He does the rest.

Whatever happens, we can rest in Him even if we suffer for a short time in this life!

All of this is from God who does not need us but in His love has opened His heart so that we can participate in Him through Christ in the Holy Spirit.

Let us receive His grace, His good news for the good news is God who already has us all of us in His embrace!