

Holy Trinity Lutheran Church Des Moines, WA June 3, 2012

Romans 8:14-17

Rejoice in What the Triune God has Done for You!

1. *Led by the Holy Spirit...*
2. *To be children of the Father...*
3. *And co-heirs with the Son*

Hymns: 195 – 278 – Distribution: 193, 194 –
Closing: First Song of Isaiah

All Scripture quotations from the NIV 1984

Romans 8:14-17 – Those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, “Abba, Father.” The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children. Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.

Today, undoubtedly, is a special Sunday for us! Why? Is it because today is the first Sunday of summer vacation from school? That probably is a special thing to many of you, but that’s not what I had in mind.

Is it because today is Graduation Sunday for our school’s 8th graders? And yesterday was graduation for Evergreen Lutheran High School? That is also special, but again, it’s not what I had in mind.

Why is today special, dear members and friends of Holy Trinity Lutheran Church and School? Today is a special day, because we celebrate the church festival for which our congregation and school are named. Today is Trinity Sunday.

The doctrine of the Trinity has taken some knocks down through the years. If you aren’t sure about that, go online and search the historical and current debates on the teaching of the Trinity. You will find some who claim that this teaching was an invention of the institutional church. You will find arguments that since the word “Trinity” is not in the Bible – it was coined about 190 A.D. – that the teaching of a Trinity is not true. (Although such people don’t seem to have a problem using the word “Bible,” even though it’s not in the Bible!) You will find religious groups that deny that Christ is true God from eternity or deny that the Holy Spirit exists as a person. Many of these arguments originate from a frustration that we cannot understand the doctrine of the Trinity with our feeble minds.

Yet we have clear Scripture verses that attest that God is one:

- *“Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one.” (Deuteronomy 6:4)*
- *“I and the Father are one.” (John 10:30)*

And we also have clear Scripture verses that talk about the separate identity and work of the three persons:

- The Baptism of Christ, when he was in the water while the dove (Holy Spirit) descended and the voice from heaven (Father) spoke.
- *“Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.” (Matthew 28:19)*
- *“May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.” (2 Corinthians 13:14)*

Yet all this can seem like dry facts and dogmatics until we see the Trinity in action. As I worked through this text in Romans 8 this week, I was really edified in the work of the Trinity mentioned here, for I had never picked

up on the specific references to the three persons of God in action in this section before. These verses make a great reading for Trinity Sunday today! I'd like to lead you through these four short verses and lead you to **"Rejoice in what the Triune God has Done for You!" We will see that we have been:**

1. **Led by the Holy Spirit...**
2. **To be children of the Father...**
3. **And co-heirs with Christ**

1. Led by the Holy Spirit

Our text told us, *"Those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God... The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children."* That's an interesting way to put what the Holy Spirit does: He has "led" us. How have we been led?

Some people use that phrase today in an incorrect way. They say that they are led by the Spirit when they follow their own impulses and desires. "Following feelings" is not what is meant by being led by the Spirit. In fact, the verses before our text make it very clear that being led by the Spirit means we will actually go against our personal desires and will. In the verses before our text, Paul says, *"Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires... The mind of sinful man is death... The sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so. Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God... If you live according to the sinful nature, you will die.."*

Christians in Rome at the time of Paul could be led by their own nature to do many immoral, ungodly things. And their own impulses would be satisfied very well! The culture of overindulgence, immorality, and hedonism was all around believers in Paul's day, but those were not impulses to follow.

We'd have to say the same about your life and your natural impulses. What has "led" you, but has not been a godly path for you to go down? What ungodly impulses have you

satisfied? What selfish goals have you pursued? What innate thoughts of greed have you striven to fulfill? As you search your own covetous, selfish heart, only you and the triune God will be able to completely answer those questions.

Paul tells us that we have been led by the Spirit, who has sanctified and changed our hearts. Flashes of his work can be seen in a believer's life. The book of Romans follows an easy outline up to this point. Chapters 1-5 talk about our justification before God because of the work of our Savior, Jesus Christ. Especially in chapter 3, we hear: *"Righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood."*

Chapters 6-8 talk about the life of sanctified believers in our Savior. The Holy Spirit has worked faith in you and has changed your life of sin to a life of good works. Our New Man inside us wants to resist sin. He desires the good. And we see flashes in our life that we have been led by the Spirit and are children of God.

Isn't it reassuring, though, that our ultimate comfort does not lie in our own sanctified good works? For our sinful nature still clings to us and doubts would plague us. Looking inside our hearts many days, we don't "feel" like God's children and that we are exemplary Christians. We see sinful attitudes. We see failure.

Therefore, dear friends, we must listen to the Spirit's continued testimony in the Word and the Sacraments, through which we have been sanctified by the Holy Spirit. With water and the Word, the Spirit has testified that you are God's child. With Christ's body and blood that is truly present in the bread and wine, the Holy Spirit testifies that Christ gave his body and blood for your forgiveness. With the words of Scripture, the Spirit testifies that you have been adopted as God's dear children through faith because of Christ's work. How true it is, as we read in the Gospel reading today: *"God so loved*

the world that he gave his one and only Son that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have everlasting life.” (John 3:16)

This testimony of the Spirit in the Word and in our sanctified lives has completely changed our outlook: *“You did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship.”* No more fear! The Romans who worshiped the gods of their religion had to fear the fickleness and pettiness that their myths promoted. World religions that teach a salvation based on works always leave its disciples wondering, “Have I done enough to be saved?” That is a climate of fear!

In Jesus Christ our Savior we have no reason to fear. Our salvation has been completely paid for and won on the cross. The empty tomb proves his victory and the fact that we are children of God!

2. To be children of the Father

This leads us perfectly into the second thought in our text. The Spirit has led us to see how we are children of the Father. What does this mean for us? How does Paul say this to affects us? *“You received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry ‘Abba, Father.’*

This affects our prayer life. We can cry, “Abba, Father!” Abba is an interesting word. It’s used only three times in the Bible. One of the other times is in Galatians 4, in a parallel thought to our reading today. The other instance is when Jesus prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane in the Gospel of Mark and called out to his “Abba, Father.”

“Abba” is an Aramaic word for father. There are more than one such word. Abba stresses a close, familiar, relationship. Do some of you here have a close, familiar relationship with your father? If you’re still living at home, is your father someone that you trust? Someone that you can laugh with? Someone whom you know loves you? Someone that you can go to with a need? If so, he is your Abba. I do pray that you and your father have such a relationship.

What a blessing that we can call on God with this name! Jesus taught us to pray in the Lord’s Prayer, “Our Father in heaven.” We certainly would have no arguments if Jesus had told us to call God our “Master” or our “Supreme Creator.” But he taught us to pray, “Our Father,” Abba. We can have firm confidence that our God loves us and will hear and provide for us. How well Martin Luther put it when he wrote in his explanation to the Address:

“With these words God tenderly invites us to believe that he is our true Father and that we are his true children, so that we may pray to him as boldly and confidently as dear children ask their dear father.”

We see a second effect of being children of the Father in this reading. Paul wrote, *“Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God...”* You are an heir!

Can you imagine being surprised by a notification that you had inherited a fortune? It happened to Charles Heidbrink. Charles was sitting in his favorite chair at home watching TV with his wife when the telephone rang. The man on the other end of the line asked if it was Charles. Charles reluctantly said “Yes,” because he thought it was a telemarketer. On the other end of the line was a private detective who had spent more than a month looking for any relatives of the late Robert James Harding, who left an estate worth between \$3to \$5 million. Heidbrink had not spoken to Robert, his first cousin, since 1952. After he hung up, he turned to his wife Donna and said, “You’ll never guess what that call was all about.” Heidbrink said that if he inherited the money, he would buy new golf clubs to replace his 20-year old set, have some fun with his grandkids, and would remodel the kitchen for his wife.

Can you imagine hearing the news that you had inherited \$3 million? I have better news for you than that! You have inherited a windfall. The richest man in the world, who lives in Mexico, has \$69 billion. The second-wealthiest, who lives in Seattle, has \$61 billion. But you are wealthier than both. **You have an eternal**

inheritance in heaven, for you are a child of our heavenly Father!

3. And co-heirs with the Son

If you've been paying attention, you realize that we have one more person of the Trinity to cover. We have seen that we have been led by the Spirit to be children of the Father. Our text concludes that we are *"co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory."*

You get to share things with the Son of God! But did you hear the first thing that we share? We get to share in his sufferings. That doesn't sound like good news, does it? Why would we have to share in Christ's sufferings?

We may wonder at times why, if we're adopted as God's children, we have to struggle and suffer so much. Look at your elder brother Jesus. What was his life on this earth like? Remember how his enemies hated him? Remember how they opposed him? Remember how they plotted against him and planned his demise and death? Remember how they abused him?

Soon before Jesus left this world, he told his disciples, *"If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first. If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you."* (John 15)

Peter would later write in his first letter: *"Dear friends, do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed. If you are insulted because of the name of Christ, you are blessed, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you... If you suffer as a Christian, do not be ashamed, but praise God that you bear that name."* (chapter 4)

We certainly do not share in Christ's sufferings in order to win our salvation. But we do share in his sufferings because we are his followers in this world. Suffering and difficulty

will certainly come when we faithfully follow him.

Yet look at what we will also share with him. We are co-heirs of his glory! This glory is beyond our grasp to understand. What glory Scripture declares he has! Exalted to the right hand of God. Shining in heavenly, transfiguration-like brightness. And he will share it with us! That's a novel thought, isn't it? Someone who has inherited wonderful things turning to his relation and saying, I'd like to share this with all of you!" How true this is, for one day Jesus will turn to you and say, *"Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world."* (Matthew 25:34)

So today, members and friends of Holy Trinity Lutheran Church and School, let us rejoice! Let us not get caught up in the frustration of not being able to understand the Trinity. **Rather, let us marvel in what the**

Trinity has done. We have been:

- 1. Led by the Spirit...**
- 2. To be children of the Father...**
- 3. And co-heirs with the Son**

"Praise the LORD, O my soul; all my inmost being, praise his holy name!" (Psalm 103:1)
Amen.