Topic: Peace and Paradox (Season of Pentecost 1, Lectionary C)
Scripture: Psalm 8, Romans 5:1-5, John 16:12-15
Hymns: BB202 Amazing Grace, VU235 O Worship the King, BB1 Joyful, Joyful

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Let’s take a moment to pray…

Lord, before this world's days even began, your Word was in the beginning, and it was with you and it was you. The mystery of that brings us to our knees. Yet today you allow us to open your Word and know you better. So, we ask that you would give us eyes to see and ears to hear. Give us hearts open to your Spirit as we seek you. AMEN.

(SLIDE of) G. K. Chesterton said of our faith, "The Christian ideal has not be tried and found wanting. It has been found difficult; and left untried." When we speak of being justified by faith, really we are talking about the most radical kind of peace imagineable... peace with God.

Not a truce where there is only a temporary suspension of hostility between the parties; and not a cold ceasefire where peace is only agreed to for a specific benefit of either party... rather we seek real peace.

Lasting reconciliation. It is not a peace as the world understands the term because peace as the world understands it is riddled with problems. We have peace today mainly because of power and the radical imbalance of it that we wield.

Today's worldly peace is achieved because nations like Canada, the United States, the United Kingdom, Russia, China all have power in weapons (SLIDE), most of them nuclear.

It's an uneasy peace, maintained by the fact that if any one of these nations stepped out in a bid for dominance, they would face the other nations allied to stop them. The balance of power is maintained by no one having power absolutely, and everyone's finger being on the trigger.

Peace with God is entirely different. Peace with God is achieved by one simple thing: through the blood of Jesus Christ. Because of Christ, we now (SLIDE Rom 5:2) "**stand in grace**". And notice the word: Stand.

We don't crawl, tremble, or tiptoe. We are not at peace with God because we have the power to do so along with Him. We are rooted in grace to stand... for only God's grace could be strong enough to support us to stand before God. This is the paradox of peace with God, the confusing and even contradictory sounding statement...

We do not stand by our own strength, for our own strength is completely insufficient before God. It reminds me of something in nature, actually... the hummingbird. Hardly the size of my big toe, but capable of hovering in mid-air by flapping its tiny little wings up to 80 - yes, 80 - times per second.

Which of us can do ANYTHING 80 times per second? (SLIDE: Don't answer that...)

By all of what we know, this tiny little miracle should collapse from exhaustion and yet it lives on. Why? Because it was designed to do so. Likewise, we who stand in grace are not held up by own our endurance alone, but by divine design - by the justification through Jesus Christ, given by the Father, and applied by the Spirit.

(SLIDE) Father - Son - and Spirit.

Speaking of the Father, the Son, and the Spirit... it is Trinity Sunday. The Trinity is not something I've focussed on in my ministry. Too often the Trinity is treated like spiritual trigonometry... begging complex calculations and formulae by the most highly trained theological thinkers of our day. Nearly every conceivable way we humans have tried to wrap our minds around the Trinity ends up being a heresy.

There's the ever popular **Modalism** which is where we think of God as the Father in one place, the Son in another, and the Spirit in another but He's never all three at the same time. **Arianism** denies the co-eternal nature of the Son and His divinity - so that's out. **Tritheism** is what you'd expect, thinking of Father/Son/Spirit as three separate gods somehow co-existing.

**Unitarianism** is the opposite, teaching God is only ever one which denies Jesus and the Spirit entirely - no help there. **Partialism** is the middleground between the last two, that Father/Son/Spirit are just each a third of one God only being God when they are together. **Docetism** teaches that Jesus only APPEARED to be human, but that his divinity abandoned Him when he was crucified.

And that's just the big ones. I could go on for hours, there's more heresy about the Trinity than there are stars in the night sky... because each time we try to explain the Trinity we come up short. We find a Scriptural rebuff that says we missed something.

And, in my estimation, even the attempt misses the point. The Trinity, to me, is not a doctrine to be discussed, dissected, and then filed away. When we do that, we unravel the mysteries surely but we also take away its marvel, its awe, and some of its power. The Trinity is the heartbeat of the gospel. (SLIDE John 16:12-15) In our Scripture this morning Jesus speaks of the Holy Spirit that will guide us into all truth.

But Jesus makes clear this spirit does not speak independently, instead it takes what belongs to Jesus and declares it to us. The Spirit glorifies the Son; the Son glorifies the Father. Think of the Trinity not like a triangle (SLIDE) with its rigid lines and static angles... we have to stop trying to stuff God into this shape like some oversized coat into a box.

The early church fathers such as John of Damascus, and more recently C.S.Lewis in his work *Mere Christianity*, along with Jurgen Moltmann and Timothy Keller use the image of a dance to describe the Trinity. It comes from the poetic use of the Greek word *Perichoresis*. Meaning...(SLIDE) Joyful Movement, Mutual Indwelling.

Maybe it's a strange equivilency and reference, but modern science nows tells us that everything at the subatomic level is constantly in motion, and the things in our universe each have a particular vibration... maybe this is a good way to envision the Triune God. After all, movement is the language of creation.

God moved, and the Earth was created. God moved, and the flora and fauna were made. God breathed life into clay, and humanity was born. Creation is born out of movement.

In the paradox that is the Trinity, we can see the source of that movement: eternal love poured out from Father, to the Son, to the Spirit... and in the Trinity we can see the course of that movement: that eternal love is poured out finally to us.

Equally paradoxical is Paul's claim about suffering that we heard this morning. Just how can anyone rejoice in their sufferings? Suffering is awful, no one seeks out suffering for themselves.

Paul writes, "**hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us**". We can see the dance of Father, Son, and Spirit here in what Paul writes... (SLIDE)

We have (SLIDE of Rm 5:1) PEACE with the Father, (SLIDE of Rm 5:2 added), THROUGH the Son, and this love (SLIDE of Rm 5:5) is POURED INTO OUR HEARTS by the Holy Spirit. The Father does not watch from a distance, while the Son waits on the benches, with the Spirit simply cheering on from the sidelines.

The Father ordains our refining, the Son enters our suffering, and the Spirit sustains us through it, transforming our afflictions into glory. The Father does not waste anything, including our sufferings and pains - He moves all things to our benefit. The son sanctifies our sufferings by His own. And the Spirit makes us radiant with a hope that cannot be broken or snuffed out - because it is poured INTO us, not earned BY us.

Each person of the Trinity is active in our redemption: The Father loved; The Son saved; The Spirit indwells. The Godhead, all at work in our salvation.

Such a truth should change us... it should speak to how we live, how we make decisions, how we treat and see other people, and how we look at the future. Our experience of God's Triune love should change how we pray because we are communing with a Father who loves, a Son who intercedes, and a Spirit who translates for us.

It should change how we view and endure suffering, for we suffer not alone but in company with the One who suffered first and now sends the Comforter to walk with us. This truth should change how we hope... hoping not in circumstances but in the unchanging three-fold love of the Father, Son, and Spirit.

Our lives - when shaped by the Trinity - becomes a living echo of divine communion. When we suffer with others, we reflect Christ's incarnation; When we forgive, we replicate the Father's mercy; When we speak truth, we are in lock-step with the Spirit.

So stand... stand in grace, rejoice in suffering, hope in the God who does not disappoint and on this Sunday lets worship not just with our mind, but with our whole being. Father - Son - and Spirit, One God now and forever, forever dancing, forever loving, forever ours. AMEN.