

Communion with The Trinity

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[0 : 00] Okay, we've been reading the last four Sundays, we've been reading Ephesians chapter 1, it's kind of been our base chapter for looking at this whole series on communion with God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

I'm just going to read the second half of that chapter from verse 15 to the end of the chapter. It's a really great prayer, really, and longing of Paul for the church in Ephesus.

For this reason, because I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and your love towards all the nations, all the saints, I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers, that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the spirit of wisdom and of revelation and the knowledge of Him, having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which He has called you, what are the riches of His glorious inheritance in the saints, and what is the immeasurable greatness of His power towards us who believe, according to the working of His great might, that He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at the right hand in the heavenly places.

Far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age, but also in the age to come. And He put all things under His feet and gave Him as head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.

And maybe focusing as we go through, it's going to be broader than this chapter, but as we go through, maybe verses 17 and 18, particularly that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, having the eyes of your hearts enlightened that you may know hope.

[1 : 53] Okay, so the series, we're going to look short series on communion with God. Now, I'm sure you've heard people say at various points in their lives, this is really beyond my pay grade.

Well, that's exactly how I feel when we're looking at something like this, that the character of God, the person of God, I feel it's beyond my pay grade.

In other words, it's beyond my understanding. Ephesians 3 verse 8 speaks about the inexhaustible riches of God, and there is something inexhaustible about trying to understand what the trinity of God is, God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

There's a famous quote from Martin Luther, the great reformer who was asked to preach on the cry of forsakenness of Jesus on the cross, my God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

And that he's supposed to have shut himself up for several days just to meditate and think and pray about that. And he came out of that time and he said, God forsaken of God, who can understand it?

[2 : 58] And actually I feel very much the same way when we are talking about the truth of the trinity. God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, three persons but one God.

And so, but we're going to delve into it a little bit anyway and try and unpack what God reveals, some of what God reveals about it, because what we do know is there's nobody like God at all. It talks about his, in verse 18 it talks about his immeasurable greatness of his power towards us who believe, or his incomparable greatness. And that is a good word to use when we're thinking about the trinity, that he is, when we're thinking about God as trinity, it's absolutely incomparable. There's nothing like it. We can't take anything alongside it and say, this is what it's like, because it's, the character of God is completely unique. So we have something interesting in the Old Testament. We have basically all of the Old Testament emphasizing and spending a whole lot of time telling us that there's only one God. There's only one God.

[4 : 08] So we look at some of the verses, just a couple of the verses, but that great Shema, the great prayer of the people of Israel in the Old Testament, Deuteronomy 6, here Lord, the Lord our God, the Lord is one, he's one.

Love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul and with all your strength. So that was the very core basis of the people of Israel's understanding of God. He was one. He was one. He wasn't like all the other gods of all the other nations, but there was hundreds of gods, gods for all kinds of things. One God, and in Samuel 2, 2, there is no one like holy like the Lord. There is no one like the God. There is no rock like our God. There is the one God that we have that we recognize, and the New Testament comes with that background. And then clearly, and I'm not going to spend any time with this because Thomas and John have looked at that, clearly the New Testament teaches that God the Father is God, God the Son, Jesus is God, and God the Holy Spirit is God.

[5 : 13] And so we have this deep complication and deep revelation of a different understanding of the one God, and that is what is revealed to us.

It's not necessarily explained, but it's revealed to us. And you know, it doesn't matter what illustrations that we try to use. You can't use illustrations to explain the Trinity. You know, there's lots of famous ones, isn't there? It's like an egg. So you've got the yolk and you've got the white and they've got the shell, and it's three different things, but it's just one egg. But that doesn't really help.

A little bit helps, but if you take the yolk away, it's no longer an egg. If you take the white away, it's no longer an egg. And the shell on its own is no longer an egg. It's just a shell. But if you take Jesus away from God the Father and God the Son, He's still God. If you take the Holy Spirit away from God the Father, He's still God.

[6 : 08] It's, they're interchangeably uniquely linked, you know, a shamrock, three different bits and one shamrock or water. There's ice and there's steam and there's water, but they're all one thing.

They're all trying to explain the Trinity, but none of them can explain the Trinity because the Trinity is completely unique because the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit as persons are in essence God, and there's great equality, and yet there's personhood in this one God. And then we have, just to complicate it further, we've got the incarnation, and we've got Jesus the Son taking on flesh and becoming a human being and just to make things that little bit more difficult. So we have nothing to compare God, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit with, not even in our imagination, we've got no measure at best, we've got tastes and glimpses and shadows, but it's what He reveals to us.

A divine society, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, of perfect love, creativity, goodness, justice, absolute sinless purity, unimaginably beautiful and unimaginably terrifying at the same time.

[7 : 29] That's the picture of a holy, perfect, triune God. Now there's several things about that that we need to think about, and we've used this chapter which speaks so much about God, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit as God.

The first is, I'm speaking more generally, the first is mystery, okay? Three persons, one God. Irreducible complexity, but so one God.

A divine society, and there's so much we don't know about that, you know, there's so much we don't understand in our lives. I really love Keller's, Tim Keller's insight for us as Christians about prayer, okay?

This is not exactly directed to the Trinity, but it's the same kind of thing where he says, God will only give you in prayer what you would have asked for if you knew everything He knows.

So this sense of that, there's so much at the time, we don't really know God and know what He wants for us, because He knows so much and we don't. He's infinite. There's nothing He doesn't know, nothing outside His sovereign hand, and He's good even when we experience the evil or can't understand our life or our heart.

[8 : 43] And so there's mystery in the God that you and I serve, even in simply the fact that He's a Trinitarian God, God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. We can't reduce our faith in God to simple propositions.

We can't simply have slot machine theological answers to everything about God. Worship for us should involve awe and should involve mystery.

There's that sense in which God is Trinity. He'd remind us of that, that He's absolutely different from anything and anyone and therefore is worthy of our worship.

So there's mystery, but there's also humility. When we come to worship this Trion God, a glorious God, that we are not gods.

We're not Trion. We're not complex. We're not infinite. We're not eternal. And it's the absurdity, isn't it really?

[9 : 45] It's the absurdity of sin and the human race, where we've tried to be God. We've tried to be in control. We've tried to take over.

We weren't content with God's Lordship and sin and what it does in our lives, it just says, we'll take over from that. And we see the utter devastation when we vie against each other and against God for sovereignty and for control.

It's terrifying what we're doing. We can tort reality and what we've got is, what we have as a result is a universe of pretend gods.

And in our pride, we've thought that we can do what God, this Trion God alone can do. And you know what I do? I have to say sometimes I shiver when I hear someone say, oh, you know, when I meet God, I'm going to give him a piece of my mind.

I'm going to tell him a few things about how he should have done things and how he should have done this and that and the next thing. You know, as if we know the end from the beginning, as if we are able to grasp the perfection of justice and love, when sometimes we're probably more concerned with the smoke from our neighbor's barbecue making a mess on the washing that we've just hung out.

[11 : 04] You know, how can we take that position of being gods in our lives when we are so different from him and he is so unique in his Trion glory.

So there's mystery and there's humility, but there's also incredulity as this God reveals himself to us, not just his patience with us and his delayed justice and the reality that evil will be turned on its head one day, but his extravagance.

I just want to speak about that for a moment today, his extravagance, because what salvation means in this, this is what I want to focus on as Christians tonight, if we are Christians tonight, salvation means what it means that this Trinitarian God comes to live in us.

The Trinitarian God. It's the greatest thing by far about being a Christian is that this great God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, the Father comes and lives in us, the Son comes and lives in us and the Holy Spirit comes and lives in us.

And that great reality is that we are united immediately to this divine society when we become Christians.

[12 : 29] Now I'm just going to give you some verses about that because that's quite important, hopefully. This battery stopped working, Ali. Oh, there we go.

Okay, so I'm just going to go through a few verses which remind us that God's Father, Son and Holy Spirit live in us, John 14, Jesus replied, anyone who loves me will obey my teaching, my Father will love them and we will come to them and make our home with them.

So the Trinity comes and lives with us, the Holy Spirit and Christ, John 14, if you love me, keep my commandments, I will ask the Father, He will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever, the Spirit of truth.

And then He goes on to say, for He lives with you and will be in you, I will not leave you as orphans, Jesus says, I will come to you, Jesus is the Son. And then Galatians, Paul says, I have been crucified with Christ, I no longer live, but Christ lives in me.

Romans 8, the Holy Spirit, the Spirit raised Jesus from the dead, is living in you. He raised Christ from the dead, will also give life to your mortal bodies of His Spirit. Who lives in you?

[13 : 41] No one has seen the God, one John 4, but if we love one another, God lives in us and His love is made complete. The Triune God and God the Holy Spirit, do you not know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit lives among you?

You've got these great truths and there's many, many more references to that which remind us that we have communion with this Triune God as Christians.

And that is a remarkable truth, and we're praying, verses 17, 18, that the Spirit of wisdom and revelation will help us to know Him better, to give us a knowledge of Him.

And that's our theme, as people we have communion with God as Christians, God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and we, our goal in life is to know Him better.

So there's, tonight, there's no, remember this this evening, there's no such thing as an ordinary Christian. Every day, every moment, you're waking hours, you're sleeping hours, you're indwelt by God the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit as a Christian.

[14 : 51] The divine life is in us as Christians. Might not feel it, might not sense it, but that's what is revealed to us, and that is the wisdom of God.

And the other thing is to be encouraged by is that, you know, there's a famous phrase that says, it takes a village to raise a child. I think it's an African phrase, it takes a village to raise a child. In other words, you know, it's not just an individual parental thing, it's the whole village. We believe that as a church, it takes a church to raise a child. That's why baptism of infants is so important to us.

But it's also true that it takes a trinity to raise a Christian. It takes a trinity to raise a Christian. We are disciples as Christians by divine, the divine society.

The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit work together so that we don't fall into a pit of hell, and that we are redeemed by Him.

[15 : 52] And with His wisdom and with His revelation, we seek to know Him better. So just a couple of things I want to say about that is that as Christians, He makes His home and as we saw that in John 14, 23, and also in 1 Corinthians 16, we become the temple of the Holy Spirit.

So you know, in the Old Testament, that was the picture, wasn't it? That they built us a tabernacle, then a temple, and God lived in the temple around His people.

Now in Christ, we are the temple. Every individual Christian is the temple. God comes and dwells in us, we and God. We become part of that trinitarian family.

And as Christians, this Emmanuel principle, God with us, helps us to begin to appreciate and enjoy divine fellowship.

That's really what being a Christian is about, is we begin... Let's put aside laws and rules and regulations just now, okay? I'm going to church and reading your Bible and all these things, which are all very important.

[17 : 02] But it's knowing divine fellowship. It's knowing and beginning to know Him better, as we're told, as the eyes of our hearts become enlightened, knowing Him better.

So we begin to know who He is, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. We begin to know His peace and know belonging and know His various unique characteristics.

And we converse with Him. So you know what it says in the New Testament, pray without ceasing. I think that means we go around in our knees. But I think it does mean that wherever we are, whatever we're doing, the Spirit of God's with us, the person of God, the Father and the Son, the Holy Spirit are with us.

So we can converse with Him anytime, anytime, anyplace. We can talk with Him all the time. Don't we need to be a certain place and a certain way to talk with Him? And we're listening, listening for insight into what He is teaching us.

And we worship Him and we see truth in a different light. You know, I really love that phrase, that the eyes verse 18, the eyes of our hearts being enlightened, it's a brilliant phrase because it talks about knowledge, it does talk about knowledge, but it talks about seeing, but it talks about the eyes of our heart, not our brain, not our mind.

[18 : 29] It does talk about the eyes of our heart because it's a little bit, I think John was speaking about this morning, about the heart being at the center, the ego of our lives, the very core of who we are.

So church isn't for us, well it shouldn't be for us. And reading the Bible shouldn't be for us merely intellectual or merely informational.

We should be praying that the eyes of our hearts are opened. That means that we see things in such a way that He reveals that change what we're like in our very hearts.

And that's a great thing. And we require His great power and His greatness to enable us to do that. And that's a beautiful and real reality for us. And it can be deceptive sometimes, you know, because our bodies are decaying.

[19 : 31] Some of our bodies are decaying quicker than others. Some of us are more decayed than others, but for Christians for us as Christians are in our lives, our hearts are being renewed.

We're becoming younger, there's restoration happening and our bodies will follow suit one day in glory. And we recognize that because He has made His home with us.

He has made His home. He will not leave us, we are His temple. Now I'm also going to read a couple of verses about the challenge of that.

Okay, the challenge of communion with God, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, this divine trinity is in us. And it's from Titus 3, so I'm jumping about a little bit, I'm sorry.

For the grace of God has appeared to offer salvation to all people. It teaches us to say no to ungodliness and worldly passions and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age while we wait for the blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness, to purify for Himself a people that are His very own eager to do good.

[20 : 48] Now, okay, I don't rip this apart, okay? I've got an illustration, it's far from perfect, but I hope it maybe will help a little bit to understand the challenge of having God, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit in our hearts, in our lives.

Just think of this as old, confirmed, no, maybe it's not need to be old, but a confirmed bachelor anyway. We use that phrase sometimes, maybe we don't use it very much. Someone who was set in their ways anyway, maybe had one or two bad habits, but there was nobody there to notice that they were confirmed bachelor.

And then remarkably, this confirmed bachelor falls in love and is captivated by the beauty of his bride, who he marries.

And she comes into his home and all of a sudden the home has changed. It doesn't look like a bachelor's pad for long.

The decor maybe changes. There's a woman, okay, there's a million stereotypes here, I'm sorry. But there is a woman's touch comes and things change within the house altogether.

[22 : 00] And they do that together, this new loving couple, they have an amazing time together. But there's also some challenges for the one who was a confirmed bachelor.

And if his routines have been radically changed, some of his habits and his behaviors are being challenged. Some of the length of time that dirty dishes maybe sat on the side of the sink or the rim round the bath or changing the sheets in the bed and things like that.

There's transformation, but in some ways, some of the transformation is quite difficult. Okay, some miserable illustration.

But I hope you get the picture. A million times more is what happens when the trinity of God comes to live in our lives. It's a lifelong transformation.

There's riches, there's beauty, there's companionship, there's things we're learning. We never knew the eyes of our heart are being enlightened. It's also challenging to have God the trinity in our heart and in our life.

[23 : 12] But we are asked to say yes to godliness and no to ungodliness. So yes, you know, we're part of his family.

We're ushered into this divine society and we see obedience in a new light so that the law of love or the law of God becomes the law of love. And life becomes worship in a way that it was dull and boring before.

And we want to please him and we want to do what he wants us to do because we've seen things differently and we've learned differently from him. But also, and maybe we underestimate this in our lives, he also encourages not only to say yes to his beauty, but to say no to our ugliness that remains within us that we battle against.

We know, as he says here, to worldly passions and ungodliness. And so the reality of having the try on God living is that sometimes we have to say no to what we want to do.

And there is an awesomeness about God living in us. You know, Sam 139 does kind of refer to that. He says, where could we go from your spirit? We can't. There's nothing.

[24 : 24] We can sometimes be scary for us because sometimes we like to sin and do the wrong things. And so we have remaining sin to battle against and we're tempted in our selfish hackles rise.

We don't like saying no. But sometimes he's asking us to say no to things that he hates.

The choices, the paths, the crossroads we will have every day. He wants us sometimes to say yes to beauty and no to our ugliness.

Communion with God, this Trinitarian God, you know, it means something very significant. It means that we need to learn to say no to dragging him back to the darkness of the cross, who he's paid already for the price of our sins and making him just see them again as things that we love.

It means not dragging him back to the darkness of the cross, where he paid the excruciating price to set us free. So there is a sense in which having the Trinitarian God is saying no to the battles that

we face and saying no to certain things in our lives.

[25 : 47] See, if we don't care about that and if we don't care about holiness or godliness or dealing with sin which he hates, you know what it would be like doing in my marriage with Katrina?

It would be like me inviting a prostitute to the house and to our bed and say, Katrina, you don't mind if we share a bed together with the prostitute, the three of us all? No problem.

And that's horrendous, isn't it? It's an embarrassing thing to say. But the reality is that the Bible often talks about spiritual adultery and it's because it's in relational terms that God wants us to consider how we live our lives and how we think about how we live and what we do and saying yes to his beauty and no to sin.

So that's the challenge of communion and communion we also recognize and I'm drawing to an end with this is that communion with God who dwells in us because we're the temple of the Holy Spirit is not just private and personal, it's also communal.

So in Ephesians chapter 2 and verse 19, yeah, 19 it says, you're no longer citizens and strangers but your fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God built in the foundation of the apostle and the prophets.

[27 : 09] Christ Jesus the cornerstone whom the whole structure joined together grows into a holy temple in the Lord and in him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.

Okay, so it's all related. So it's not just that we're individually temples but together we're temples because the moment you come to Christ you're actually part of a society, the divine society, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

We're never just individuals but we come not just to that divine society but to the church, the people of God and to his family.

So communion is not just private and personal. Trinitarian at its core. Social at its core. Your salvation is not just your own and it's not just personal.

It's societal, it's communal. Now church, we often stress here and I'll stress it ad nauseam and I'll stress it as long as I'm here until the day I'm taken is that community is hugely significant.

[28 : 19] We grow together. We're ambassadors together. We're light and salt of the world together. We reflect the love of God together. Now we have no time to look at that but I just want to say in conclusion two things about this being together is that worship together is much more than just doing church.

We often think of, oh well, it's the worship hour, half ten, half five. I'm going to worship them. This is my worship and that's right, it's good. We do worship together but it's much more than doing church. It's about sharing communion with the triune God as a people, sharing our lives, sharing discipleship, sharing mission, sharing obedience, sharing support, sharing accountability.

You tell me about unity as a doctrine. I'll tell you there's no more important one in the universe because it's what we are. You tell me about division.

I'll tell you there's no greater sin in the universe because we're trying to divide what God has joined together. Worship and the sacrament that we enjoy together is that special, public worship for example is that special expression of communion with God that is just what we are as believers.

[29 : 45] And I think that our public gatherings in church should be, for that reason I think they should be important and special and significant. And I think that's why gathering together on the Lord's Day in public worship matters.

And that's why I think wearing masks and being divided and being online and being at home is just a pale reflection. And even probably at our very best what we do on Sundays is a pale reflection of what it should be.

But we come together under the preaching of the Word because we want you want and I want the eyes of our hearts to be enlightened that the spirit of wisdom and revelation will be with us.

When was the last time any of us actually thought about that? That we're looking for the God's spirit of revelation and wisdom to enlighten our hearts. It's a great prayer that we can pray for coming to church.

It shouldn't be and forgive us when it is a half hour monologue or just a midweek Bible study just because that's what we do.

[30 : 49] It's much more than that. We need to lift our understanding and our sense of community together as we worship the living God in our times together.

Now, I want to close by asking you to think about this. We have traditionally for a long time we've had two very similar, quite formal Sunday services.

Much the same thing happens every week. There's differences. Fine tuning. But there's not a great deal and that's fine. But it's been our tradition to have two Sunday services because we believe it's good.

It's good to gather. It's good to use that day. It's good to bookend the Lord's day. But I do wonder, shoot me down you can. Are we missing something?

Are we building the best gospel community in our use of the Lord's day? We know that more and more people are choosing just to come to one Sunday service.

[31 : 50] Now, I don't know why that's the case. Maybe lots of different reasons. Part of it will be tradition, part of it will be different experiences, different culture. I wouldn't like to guess all the different reasons why people won't want to come twice in a Sunday.

But what if once in a while on a Sunday evening, instead of the formal worship, we have a huge big table in here and we all bring food and we all sit with different people and we talk about life and about faith and young people sit with older people and learn from them.

We share faith experiences. We explicitly remind ourselves that we are in the company of the triune God, that the Trinity is the host of this meal and is among us.

And after spending time in gospel community together, we have worship and celebrate the Lord's Supper. We don't not make us think, maybe, a little bit more about what communion with God looks like and what is expected of us as a building joined together and take away some of the passivity of our church services and maybe our lack of interaction and lack of intentional thought about building one another up in the most holy faith, talking to one another about Jesus, learning to do that well so that when we can go into the world of work, our lives that we are more, we are speaking more naturally about Jesus with them because we are doing it with one another and we are doing what exactly was done in the New Testament church.

Just a few thoughts. Let's pray. Father, God help us to think about who you are and think about how great you are and think about the reality of what it means to fellowship with, to live with the Holy Spirit, God the Father, God the Son, in our... made their home with us.

[34 : 03] God has made his home with us and we with him. And that whatever transpires and happens in our lives that whether we live to an old age or die young, whether our lives are good or bad, from a human point of view, we have this divine source of life just working through us and never leaving us and taking us home.

And we rejoice in that great hope that death is defeated and the grave and the separation between ourselves and God has been dealt with. Help us to worship you.

Please Lord, may you give us a spirit of wisdom and revelation so the eyes of our hearts may be enlightened and that we may live in that hope, that glorious hope of the gospel.

We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.