

"Know Trinity: The Perfect Love" Gen 1:1, John 1:1, Rom 5:1-5, John 16:12-15 (09/22/24)

Last week, I shared that I embarrassed many church people by asking simple questions. One of the other questions that I asked church people was, "What is Trinity." Many people know that Trinity is "Three in one." However, Trinity is not easy to explain very clearly. Trinity is the most important doctrine of the church. There are many heresies of the church in the world. And most of the heresies were caused by a misunderstanding of the Trinity. Therefore, a correct understanding of the Trinity is very important.

The Trinity is a fundamental doctrine for the church but is also very difficult to understand. It is probably impossible to explain the Trinity in human words perfectly. Some people describe the Trinity as a tree. A tree consists of branches, a stem, and roots. So, some people have compared the Trinity to a tree. However, this is not a perfect explanation of the Trinity because branches cannot be roots and stems, and a stem cannot be branches and roots. The tree metaphor cannot explain the relationship of Trinity's three persons.

Some people used a metaphor of a person's position to describe the Trinity. For example, I am Paul. I am a husband of Sunwoo, a father of Sooho and Sua, and a son of my parents. However, I do not transform my appearance in each role.

And I cannot be in all three roles for one person. I cannot be a father and a son to my wife. In the Bible, Father God, Jesus the Son of God, and the Holy Spirit appeared independently at the same time when Jesus was baptized. So, the metaphor of a person's position cannot perfectly explain the independence of the Trinity's three persons.

Although these two metaphors help people to understand the Trinity, it is probably impossible to perfectly explain the Trinity in human words. John Wesley, in his sermon *On the Trinity*, said, "To apply this to the case before us. There are Three that bear record in heaven – And these Three are One. I believe this fact also, (if I may use the expression,) That God is Three and One. But the manner, how, I do not comprehend." John Wesley said he believed in the Trinity, but he did not understand the Trinity. Then, why does the church, and why do we have to know about the Trinity that cannot be explained by human words and even Wesley did not understand? That is because the Trinity shows the perfect love of God.

The doctrine of the Trinity was first mentioned in the Councils of Nicaea in 325 AD. At that time, the church was divided into two groups because of differences in understanding of Jesus. The emperor Constantinus worried about

the division of the empire because of the church. So, he gathered bishops in Nicaea and encouraged the church to have a united understanding of Jesus Christ. So, the Councils of Nicaea concluded that Jesus Christ had divinity and humanity. And they also concluded the doctrine of the Trinity. Then, how can the Trinity show the perfect love of God?

The doctrine of the Trinity can be simply explained as that God is one in three persons, Father, Son, and Spirit. These three persons are one but independent. Yes, it is very hard to understand the perfection of God through this study of doctrine. So, we can know the perfect love of the Trinity through being imperfect when one person of three is missing.

The first person of the Trinity is the Father. This person represents the divinity of God. God is almighty and not limited. And This God is our creator. In Genesis 1:1, "In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth," The Bible starts with God's identity as the creator. This might be the most important identity of God. Humans became sinners when the relationship between the creator and creatures was broken. As creatures, it is very important for us to recognize God as our creator to have the perfect love from God. This creator God is almighty. God can start and end the world. God is the alpha and omega. So, this

mighty God can save us. Without this first person of the Trinity, Jesus is simply a human like us. Jesus would be a good religious leader like other humans. The love without the first person of the Trinity cannot be almighty and special. It would be limited love. And this love would be ordinary love that humans also can give to people.

The second person of the Trinity is the Son. This person represents the humanity of God. God did not present far from us. In John 1:14, “And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father’s only son, full of grace and truth.” The Word became Flesh. God came to us with the human body. This means that God feels joy, sorrow, and pain just like us. God communicates with us with sympathy. God not only knew our pain and suffering but also experienced our pain and suffering with the human body. Jesus did not act on the cross. Jesus really felt the pain of crucifixion and experienced human beings’ suffering. If there is no second person of the Trinity, the love of God would be just the religious teaching. Because of this second person of the Trinity, the love of God is true and perfect love that was given to us through the sympathy of God.

The third person of the Trinity is Spirit. This person makes all of the works

of God real in this present day. When I was a teenager, I was really impressed with the love of Mother Teresa. I could not believe how a human could love other poor and suffering people so much. I hoped to be like Mother Teresa and wanted to help other people as she did. However, I had never met Mother Teresa. And I had never experienced the love of Mother Teresa. I learned a lot from her, and all of her works are historical facts, but I only saw her on TV, in movies, and in books. Her good work was not directly related to me. Mother Teresa was a real person in history, but she is not here with me in this present day. Without the third person of the Trinity, it would be the same. The creation of God and the sacrifice of Jesus would have been a thing of the past. The love of God would be limited to history. However, because of the third person of the Trinity, God is with us from the beginning to the end. God created us, and Jesus sacrificed on the cross for us. In Romans 5:5, “and hope does not disappoint us, because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us.” The love of God is here today because of the third person of the Trinity.

Therefore, without any one of the three persons, God’s love cannot be perfect. Because of the Trinity, we could know the perfect love of God.

Then, why does God choose the doctrine of the Trinity to show the perfect

love of God? Why does God choose the Trinity that we cannot understand and explain in human words? In my opinion, I believe that God used the Trinity because God wants us to feel the love of God rather than understand the love of God.

When I was a kid, my mother used to call me “Baby.” Yes, it is a very adorable calling of a mother. But the problem was that she still called me “Baby” when I was a student in elementary school, middle school, high school, and university. And even now, sometimes she still calls me “Baby.” I did not like that she called me baby. And I could not understand why she kept calling me baby when I was young. However, even though I could not understand my mother, I could feel the love of my mother when she called me “Baby.”

Now, I have become a father, so I can understand why my mother kept calling me baby. When I see my son Sooho, I often say, “Sooho, don’t grow anymore. Just stay as a baby. Don’t be a teenager and adult.” Because he is so adorable now. Now I understand that parents want their children to be babies forever. I could feel the love of my mother from past to present. Even when I was too young to understand her love, I could feel her love. After I became a father, I could understand her love. My experience revealed to me the love of my mother.

I believe the reason why God chose the Trinity is the same. We can feel the love of God even though we cannot understand the Trinity. From God's point of view, we might be too young, like little children, to fully understand God's love. European theology and philosophy influenced our understanding of faith and our studies of theology. So, the church focused a lot on explanation and proof of the Trinity. If you read the sermon of John Wesley about the Trinity, you can see that he tried hard to explain the Trinity because England was influenced by empiricism at that time. However, it might be impossible to describe and explain the Trinity in a human language perfectly. We cannot understand the Trinity unless the Holy Spirit reveals the love of God to us. The Trinity is with us now, and the Holy Spirit presents on us before the Holy Spirit reveals the secret knowledge to us. The truth that the Trinity is with us would be more important than a discussion finding a way to explain the Trinity perfectly. We can feel the perfect love of God because the Trinity is with us now. Today, I hope we can know and feel the perfect love of the Trinity. And hope for the blessing and grace of the Trinity on our church family. Amen.