

Grace and peace to you from our Triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen.

What does it take to make a great family? Or, maybe, let's do this. Take a few moments, and think of some of the great families throughout history. Now, what made them great? Now, I don't usually like to talk about this, but I've done some researching into the history of my family, and I've found family connections to the following people, Nathan Hale, a famous American spy during the Revolutionary War, Princess Diana (can't tell you how bummed I was to not receive an invite to the royal wedding last year), and, going far enough back, I've traced roots back to Charlemagne, one of the Holy Roman Emperors.

Now, does having roots like that make a family great? Or maybe being part of a famous family, like the Kennedy family or the Kardashian family, makes a family great. Or maybe being rich or powerful or influential or a family who had a role in some big event or who is known for awesome charity work makes a family great.

It is often an honor to be a member of a great family. If you agree with that, then today, I have some wonderful news for you. You are. Because of the Triune God, I'm Part of not just a great, but the Greatest Family! And you are too.

The apostle Paul writes about this family in our sermon text for this morning. Our verses, from Paul's letter to the Romans, a book which centers around the basic gospel, the message of Christ's righteousness, won for us by his life, death, and resurrection, now made ours only by the grace of God.

And now, the focus shifts to talking about the life we lead as redeemed believers, as part of the greatest family. The words before us are so fitting, especially for today, Trinity Sunday, because you know who has an active part in this family, actually, the largest role? That's right, the Trinity.

Now, I'm guessing most of you have heard the word Trinity before. But, believe it or not, you didn't hear it from the Bible. It is a word not found in the Bible...at all. Not even once. And yet, it's a word we use fairly regularly because it best describes a concept the Bible talks about that is difficult for us to completely understand.

Trinity. Triune. Literally, "three in one." Three persons in one God. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, three separate, distinct persons, yet one God. Not one person with three names and one God. Not three persons, three Gods. Three separate, distinct persons, one God.

And it's those three persons Paul focuses on this morning, and on the roles each plays in the greatest family. So, let's look at those roles, and how each person of the Trinity has a vital role in the greatest family, and even better, what role each person of the Trinity plays in your being a part of the greatest family, God's family.

Now, it would seem most logical to talk about the patriarch of the family, God the Father. Not that he's the most prominent of the Trinity or the most superior. All three persons, coequal. But can you see where our verses make mention of the Father? I can see two.

First, we are “sons of God.” Do you know what that means? You and I, we are children of God, which of course makes him our Father. That means he is the one who gave us life. King David acknowledged that when he wrote, “You created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother’s womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well.”

It makes sense. In his love, God created the world. In even greater love, God created man, woman, you, me, the crown of his creation.

And then, he made us his children. Because, even though, we were the crown of creation, man fell away in sin, our relationship with God was destroyed. And, instead of being God’s children, we were slaves...to sin, slaves to Satan. Bound to them, bound to serve their wants, their desires. And our relationship with God was one completely the opposite of love, but one of hate, one of fear of the punishment we would get because of our many sins.

You’ve seen how that broken relationship has displayed itself in your life, haven’t you? The thought, “I know what I’m doing is wrong, not pleasing to God, but who cares? It makes me feel good, so I do it.”

God, my Father, tells me to not sin, for instance, to not lie, especially to use his name to do it. But I was ashamed of that mistake I had made, so I told everyone I didn’t do it, and when they pressed me further, I said, “I swear to God I didn’t do it.”

And the list could go on and on, ways you and I have disappointed God, really, rebelling against our Father, who loves and cares for us so much he intricately knit us together in our mothers’ wombs, just the tip of the iceberg of all the blessings he’s given in our lives.

And our punishment, would have been exponentially worse than any slap on the wrist or five-minute timeout or grounding. But being condemned to only place our sins deserve, eternal death in hell.

But our Father would not sit idly by and watch as we were wasting away. So he sent his Son to earth. His Son, true God, the second person of the Trinity. Jesus, our brother, true God, came to earth to save us. Jesus, true God, also became true Man to save us. Jesus, our brother, became a man, like us, so he could be born, but born of a virgin. Jesus became a man, like us, so he would be subject to obeying God’s law, just like we have to, but he did it perfectly, where we haven’t. And then, Jesus became a man, like us, so he could die. But his death meant something, because he was dying for us, dying for our sins, so they would be taken away, so we would be saved from hell. And as God, he rose, victorious over sin death, and the devil.

Talk about a cooler, older brother, someone you look up to, someone you brag about to all your friends, or hopefully, in our case, everyone we meet! That’s Jesus, who loves us, who lived, died, and rose so there wouldn’t be that sin being that divider in our relationship with our Father.

You know what’s great about being a part of the Triune God’s family? Not just that we have forgiveness for all our sins, past, present, future. But just like in any other family, you and I, as children of God, have an inheritance. We are heirs.

You what an inheritance is, don't you? Usually the inheritance is the money, property, or whatever possessions will be given to you after the passing of someone else in the family, usually parents, grandparents, maybe even siblings, friends, neighbors. But in God's family, our inheritance is different. We are heirs because Jesus died. And we will get our inheritance when we die. The inheritance of life eternal, living in our heavenly home.

And the best part is, that inheritance is free. I don't have to try to earn or deserve it, because really, I can't. No matter how many times I screw up, give in to temptation, and believe me, I do, each and every day. But no matter how often I sin, God's love remains the same. His forgiveness remains the same. And so my heavenly inheritance doesn't change. It remains the same.

That inheritance is truly something wonderful to look forward to, to place our sure hope in, especially because there is so much in this life that tries to cause us to lose our heavenward focus. Satan works hard to get us to sin, to fall away, and knowing that we are God's children just makes him try even harder, throwing trials, obstacles, hardships in the way, whatever he can do to take us away from God.

And, as tempting as it might be to give in to those temptations, so we don't have to suffer in this life, Paul encourages us, "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." The sufferings we go through in this life, Jesus has gone through them before, he promises to bring us through them, because at the end of those sufferings, there are heavenly glories, heavenly blessings waiting for us.

But what about life now. What does being part of the greatest family, God's family, mean for me right now, today? Being a son or daughter of God means right now, every single one of us has someone we can go to, someone we can bring all of our troubles, worries, problems, requests to.

As Martin Luther wrote in the Catechism, "God 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 can take everything to God in prayer, like a child to a father. Children don't stop and wonder whether this would be a convenient time to interrupt what their parents are doing. No, they confidently ask for whatever they need whenever they want it. That's the kind of confidence we have in approaching God, our Father, with whatever we need. And we know he hears us.

How can I be sure he does? For that matter, how can I, how can we be sure of our status as God's children, of our security in this family? If you notice, we've only talked about 2 of the three persons of the Trinity, but it's that third person who gives us the confidence, who makes us sure. Of course, I'm talking about the Holy Spirit.

Do you see what Paul writes about the Holy Spirit in our verses? The Holy Spirit leads us as sons and daughters of God, and he testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. He testifies that we are God's children. He assures us we are dearly loved children of God, and here's how he does. He created saving faith in us, faith in Jesus as our Savior from sin, faith in our Triune God. That's how we became

members of God's family. And now he strengthens that faith, works in us to increase our faith, make it grow, so you and I have a faith which wholly trusts in God, in his love, and in his loving promises.

And not only does the Holy Spirit testify. He leads. He works through us to fight temptation and instead follow God. He causes us to act in our lives the way which pleases God, which makes our Father proud to have us as his children.

You and I are blessed. We are part of the greatest family, a member of God's family.. This family is great, certainly not because of me. But all because of the Triune God. This family is great because of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. And this family is one whose greatness goes beyond just this life, but whose greatness will go on forever.

The Father who created you. The Son who saved you. The Holy Spirit who leads you. The Triune God. That's who you and I believe in. We truly have an awesome God. Over the next few weeks, we're going to delve into the Apostles' Creed, taking an even more intimate look at this Triune God, seeing how they are all deeply involved in our lives. But for today, rejoice in that fact that you have a Triune God. Because of the Triune God, you are saved. Because of the triune God, you are a child of God. And because of the triune God, you are a member of the heavenly kingdom. And that's the greatest family you could be a part of, in this life and the next. Amen.