

2 Corinthians 13:11-14

Trinity Sunday

June 4 & 5, 2023

Last week I received a letter from Southwest Airlines. That in and of itself isn't unusual, since we are members of Southwest airlines' rapid rewards program. But this letter looked a little different even on the outside. It wasn't sent by bulk mail. It wasn't a colorful envelope or advertising flyer. It was a real letter. When I opened the letter, it kind of surprised me as to what was inside. It was a check for \$1,350. It wasn't one of those checks that have all the fine print written on it. It looked like a real check. It had the stub that was attached to it. All that was written on the check was a claim number.

Yet, there was real skepticism in cashing this check. So, I called Southwest Airlines. I gave them the claim the number, and they were able to track down the case that was associated with the claim number that I gave them. They said that it was reimbursement for the expenses that we had experienced with Southwest Airlines on December 26, 2022. As many might remember, we did have a bunch of expenses on that day because we had been caught in the whole Southwest meltdown that occurred. Still, I thought, we had been fully reimbursed for everything. So, I asked: *What expenses?* The agent told me that it was reimbursement for the tickets that we had bought on United Airlines to get to our final destination. I responded by saying: *What United tickets? We never flew on United airlines that day.* The agent said that they had been submitted for reimbursement. *But I didn't fly on United Airlines.* Then I asked: *What should I do with this check?* They agent told me: *Well, I would go out and have a really nice steak dinner and use it for a future trip. Is it a real check: yes, it was real.* I thought: *Well, okay?*

So, I went outside and told Nancy: It's a real check, and I guess, we have an extra \$1,300 dollars. Yet, it still sounded too good to be true. So, I thought, I need to call them again. This just seem right. Talked to a different agent who researched it much deeper than the first. It was a real check, but as it turned out, it was for the wrong Brian Adams. Apparently, there was someone else who flew through Denver the same day that we had. He didn't wait it out like us, and bought a United Airlines ticket to get to his final destination. The check was real, but it wasn't mine.

As I read the words of our text this morning this past week, the thought went through my mind: *What happens if God is real, but he isn't mine and I am not his? What happens if every one of the 3 persons of the Trinity aren't fully God?* You see, if Jesus wasn't fully God, we are not saved. Paul wanted the believers at Corinth to know with complete certainty that Jesus was fully God and he had come to do what God had promised.

For 29 chapters, two letters, Paul has described what sin had done to the church in Corinth. People were looking down their noses at one another. They played favorites among their pastors. They had issues with money and financial matters that they were taking one another to court about them. They tolerated sinful life-style of some. Some refused to respect Paul as a spiritual leader. The list could go on and on. As you read through those 29 chapters and all the sins that Paul points out, we can see that they are in our hearts also. Sin is alive and well in all of our hearts. It's not fun, is it? I don't think that the Corinthian Christians enjoyed to be divided. I don't think that they really liked to be at odds with each other. They tried to change, but couldn't. Families were in turmoil with each other. What were they to do? There needed to be a change.

As Paul closes these 29 chapters, he assures them that there is only one who can change their hearts and their minds. **"Finally, brothers and sisters, rejoice! Strive for full restoration, encourage one another, be of one mind, live in peace. And the God of love and peace will be with you. Greet one another with a holy kiss. All God's people here send their greetings. May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all."**

Paul wanted them to know, and us to know, that the Triune God is real and he is mine. He wanted them to know that the Triune God, one God in three persons – Father, Son and Holy Spirit wants to bless them with more than they ever deserved or could. Let's take a brief look at the blessings that our Triune God gives us. The Son – **"May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ."** GRACE – God's undeserved love. The Corinthians did not deserve God's love. We don't deserve God's love. And yet, he gives it with no limits. That was Paul's whole point in these two letters to the Corinthians. God had

pointed out their sins – loud and clear. But he also wanted them to see the heartfelt compassion that Jesus shows us by his death on the cross. **“May the grace of the Lord, Jesus Christ.”**

Paul continues: **“and the love of God.”** In that long first reading from Genesis, we see God’s incredible power in action. God didn’t just throw this world together in some haphazard way. Look at all the details in that account of creation. Look at how carefully he planned this world and put it together. He paid attention to every detail. Everything was absolutely and completely perfect. Why? God was going to place the crown jewel into his perfect new world. **“So, God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.”** It is with that same kind of love that God has shown this world when he sent his Son to save it – not because they deserved it, but because he loved it.

Thirdly, how does this triune God bless us? **“The fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.”** Fellowship is a word that we use often as we think of activities that we do together. But here it is much more than that. It is God fitting us together just as he wants it – perfect peace, perfect unity and perfect oneness. We can’t do that. He can. We know that in God’s eyes, our sins are forgiven and we are made perfect before him. Therefore, we can: **“Strive for full restoration, encourage one another, be of one mind, live in peace. And the God of love and peace will be with you.”**

What do I intend to do with this check from Southwest Airlines? I’m not going to deposit it or cash it. As the agent said that eventually they would figure it out and take the money back from me. It is real, but it isn’t mine. May we give thanks for the love that our Triune God has given us. It’s real, and it’s yours. Amen.