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May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God,  
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all. 2 Corinthians 13:14

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Who are you? If you had to give a description of ‘who you are’ to someone, what would you say? Very often, when we begin to explain something of ‘who I am’ to someone we may have met for the very first time, we often start with what we ‘do’: “I am a builder... a plumber... and accountant... a stay-at-home mum... retired... etc”

Sometimes, flowing from this, we may also speak of ‘what we have done’: “I built this... I won this sporting event... I have raised seven children... and so on...” Or, perhaps, we may speak of ‘events’ that have happened to us: “I am a cancer survivor... I endured the Ash Wednesday bushfires... I experienced this relationship crisis... and so on...”

Or perhaps you could look at the relationships you have in your life: father, husband, son, grandson, friend, neighbour, citizen, Christian, co-worker? Our various ‘relationships’ very much help ‘define’ who we are...

One of the ways some people help ‘define’ who ‘they are’ is to write an autobiography. And what makes for a good autobiography is not only a list of ‘achievements, happenings, or relationships. The writer of a good autobiography will also give a glimpse of their ‘soul’ as they share their thoughts and feeling surrounding such events and relationships. And everyone here could write a substantial autobiography if they were to share also this ‘inner aspect’ of their lives’.

On Trinity Sunday we celebrate who God ‘is’: and God has given us His Book, the Word, the Bible. It is here that we discover something of what God is like.

Very often people want to ‘know’ something of ‘what God is like’: but they do not want to go back to His Word, the Bible. They would rather speak of a ‘personal experience’ that is seen as a personal ‘encounter with God’. But the ‘problem’ with this ‘approach’ is exactly that: it is limited to our ‘personal experience’. Thus, the ‘infinite God’ is ‘limited’ to our ‘finite experience’.

Related to this also is that often people want a ‘simple answer’ to ‘who God is’. Rather than contemplate that an infinitely large universe has been created by an ‘eternal God, often people want a ‘definition’ of God in twenty words or less. This is a form of ‘idolatry’ when we seek to ‘make God in our image’. And, as any Old Testament prophet, or New Testament preacher would tell you, the temptation to ‘make God is our image’ is both seductive and universal. But it is our ‘human trait’...

On Trinity Sunday we are dealing with the great 'mystery' of 'who God is'. And yet we are not left 'guessing'. Rather, we 'see' God in terms of what He has done (Creator; Redeemer; Sanctifier). We know God through His activities in human history, and 'what He has done'. And in our Scripture readings this day – particularly the Gospel and our sermon text – we may reflect on the 'relationships within God', that is, how God is 'The Father, and 'The Son', and 'The Holy Spirit'. And here we may speak of the grace, love and communion that exists within God. And we may reflect on how this 'grace, love and fellowship' flows toward us.

Who is our 'God'? He is the God of grace, He is the God of love, and He is the God of fellowship. And who does not want such things in their life...? (And think about that for a moment... because some people don't want this in their lives...)

God's 'grace' is important to us. At a 'limited level' we may speak of God's grace as that grace toward fallen sinners as seen in the cross of Jesus. At one level this has to do with the reality that we are loved by God in spite of our human sin and failings. This is God's 'justifying grace'. But 'grace' – in the Bible – is wider than this. When the Apostle Paul was reflecting on the 'thorn in his flesh' (whatever that may have been – but most likely a physical ailment) he received this 'word from God (2 Cor.8:9): "But He (God) said to me (Paul), "My grace is sufficient for you, for My power is made perfect in weakness." And Paul went on to say, "Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me."

God's 'grace' is at work in our lives in so many ways... 'Grace' is not simply a technical 'bible word' meaning we are 'put right with God'. 'Grace' is about God's power at work in our lives that changes everything. 'Grace' is that 'power' from God that 'transforms life'. When the grace of God is missed, bitterness is born. But where the grace of God is embraced, forgiveness flourishes. This is God's gift to us in Christ Jesus – who is God at work in the world and our lives.

And all this comes from God, because God is 'love. God's love is seen in the creation of the world, and the creation of our own lives. God's love is seen in that we are His children (and this, also, will help us understand something of who God 'is': we are His children; He is our loving heavenly Father). The Apostle John says, "God is love" (1.Jn4:8). John says, "We love because God first loved us" (1.Jn.4:19). And our 'experience' of 'love' hints at something of the 'Divine Nature'. John also says, "Love comes from God" (1.Jn.4:7). He also says (1.Jn.4:9-10): "This is how God showed His love among us: He sent His one and only Son into the world that we might live through Him. This is love: not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins." And John also says (1.Jn.3:1): "See what great

love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are!"

We live in the fellowship of God's love. God's 'fellowship' is important to us. The Greek word for 'fellowship' here is an important Bible word: it is *koinonia*. It is sometimes translated as 'communion'. God lives in the perfect unity of love. And He calls us to reflect that same 'love' in our lives. When the Apostle Paul wrote to the Corinthian Congregation he was writing to a congregation that had experienced great division. But he could direct them to the person and work of the Holy Spirit who brings people together in the unity of love. God the Holy Spirit can do amazing things in people's lives.

If you had to say who God 'is', what would you say? We could say things like God is one who subsists in three distinct persons; we could say the unity of the Godhead exists as three coeternals, coequal Persons, each having the same nature and essence, but distinct subsistence. We could use many other words and phrases such as this (and many theological books have been filled discussing such terms: and these have been necessary to help us not stray into a wrong way of thinking). But here is a hint: don't expend too much energy on trying to explain the 'mystery of the Trinity'. It is called a 'mystery for a reason. And we so often accept such mysteries in our life.

For example, imagine trying to write down a set of instructions for falling in love, an explanation for someone who didn't previously know the experience, so that if they followed your description they would actually fall in love. Could you do it??? It's a ridiculous idea isn't it? And yet the fact that you can't explain the experience or write a manual for it doesn't stop you from falling in love.

The experience comes whether you can comprehend it or not. Am I right?? It can come even if you don't believe in it. Now exactly the same is true of the Trinity.

The good news is that the Christian faith is not about explanations (not that 'explanations', that is, doctrine is unimportant). But at the heart of 'faith' is how it impacts our lives. It is about a relationship with the living God. Even before there was ever a doctrine of the Trinity, there was an experience of the Trinity. The early church experienced God in certain ways, and as they attempted to describe their experience the idea of the Trinity emerged. They began with their experience of the living God. The theological words came later. And that is still true for us today...

On Trinity Sunday we are dealing with a mystery. That 'mystery' is that God has revealed Himself as one God (not 'three gods'). And yet God has revealed Himself as three persons (the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit) who is God.

A story is told of a little girl drawing, when her mother asks what it is she is sketching.

'I am drawing a picture of God' she said. The Mother tells her this is impossible, as no-one knows what God looks like; then the girl says 'Well they will when I'm finished!' That, in a sense, is what religion and theology is all about, trying to understand what God is like. And On this day that celebrates the mystery of the Holy Trinity, Paul's final words to the Corinthians remind us that Christ has brought grace, God brings loves, and the Spirit creates the church in whom believers live and serve.

Who is your 'God'...? Our God is the Triune God. He is the God of 'grace', 'love' and 'fellowship'. The 'Doctrine of the Trinity' isn't an attempt to put God in a box, or turn something that ought to be simple into an incomprehensible mystery; it's God's way of telling fallen sinners like us to focus on the grace, love and fellowship He gives.

Human language is never wholly adequate to communicate personal life. How we feel when significant events occur in our lives (like 'falling in love', or experiencing death), cannot be wholly carried by words. So with talk about the Trinity. No doubt it will always exceed our full comprehension. And yet we rejoice in the grace, love and fellowship we have through knowing God as our loving heavenly Father, who has come to us in Christ Jesus, and who is at work in our lives bringing us into fellowship with Him and one another by the power of the Holy Spirit.

We live and move and have our being in God (Acts 17:28). And this faith in God is not a generic faith in a generic God. As Christians, our highest privilege is knowing God as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. We may at times struggle to 'describe' what God is really like. But we may know Him, as He indeed knows and loves us as He brings us into fellowship by His wonderful grace. What a wonderful gift this is! Amen.

And may the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen.