

What is the problem with this world? The Bible's answer is simple – cosmic treason. Humanity, created in the image of God, has sinfully, willfully, boldly, adulterously rebelled against the God who created and sustains it. Humanity has stolen the crown of rule and reign from God and has thrust it upon its own. And the only appropriate question is – “how's that workin' out for us?”

The picture is clearly seen in the Garden of Eden – paradise, perfect fellowship with God is shattered by sinful rebellion. And there are three results – three fellowships broken. Where once unity and perfect fellowship reigned – now there 1.) is a broken relationship between God and man 2.) chaos in the soul of man 3.) destroyed fellowship between mankind, Adam & Eve. The relationship with God is broken – they HID FROM GOD. The relationship with their own soul was shattered – they knew the SHAME of nakedness. And their relationship with each other was irreparably broken – Adam blamed Eve, Eve blamed the serpent and their first-born son murdered their second-born in a jealous rage and tried to hide the fact from an all-seeing God.

What's wrong with the world? Cosmic treason...a spiritual condition we inherited from our spiritual parents. Let's call it Universal Disunity. A disunity that affects every human created in God's image in three ways – 1.) Your relationship with God. 2.) Your relationship with yourself 3.) Your relationship with other people. God's perfectly united world – God and man in perfect fellowship, man in perfect harmony in his soul and heart and mind, man and woman in perfect naked and unashamed-ness – perfect unity, harmony and fellowship...shattered, fractured, broken, disjointed...disunity at the core of every core human relationship.

The Bible tells how the story began...it shows us the problem in the world. But it also shows us the solution of God. It shows us the hopelessness of cosmic treason and the disunity that it breeds. But it also shows us and we begin to experience and know intimately and personally the hope of God's solution. It is God's solution, isn't it? Man gets full credit for the problem –

zero marks for the solution. God, and God alone, could make right the wrong you and I have done.

In the beginning God... In the middle God... In the end God... And Pastor Carr set the stage for this sermon last week as he preached on the doctrine of the Trinity. I missed most of his sermon as I was downstairs with the kids for a bit...(I read his manuscript this week to catch up, you can get those online you know)...but almost the first words out of his mouth when I walked into this room last week was “theology is not boring!” And as a man who has a master’s degree in Theology, I want to say a hearty “Amen!” And as a man with a French degree, I’m tempted to call this sermon, “Theology isn’t boring – Part Deux!”

Because you simply can’t call theology boring and be a Christian. Is that putting it too firmly? Let me try it again – you simply can’t call theology boring and be a Christian. Nope, that wasn’t too strong. 😊 Theology is how you became a Christian. Theology is how you stay a Christian. Theology is how you die a Christian. Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so. That is the deep, child-like theology of the Christian life – from beginning, to end, and right-way thought he middle journey of the Christian life.

The doctrine of the Trinity is anything but boring. [LEWIS QUOTES...] A couple weeks ago I was browsing in the library down the hall and stumbled upon C.S. Lewis’ book, *The Four Loves*...a book I had put on my “to read list” just a few days earlier. So I checked it out, and read it. Here is a paragraph I read just this week. This was pleasure reading, not sermon prep...but it was just another reminder of how the trinity and theology are anything but boring

Lewis writes this - “In God there is no hunger that needs to be filled, only plenteousness that desires to give. The doctrine that God was under no necessity to create is not a piece of dry scholastic [ed. theological] speculation. It is essential. Without it we can hardly avoid the conception of

what I can only call a ‘managerial’ God; a Being whose function or nature is to ‘run’ the universe, who stands to it as a headmaster to a school or a hotelier to a hotel. But to be sovereign of the universe is no great matter to God. In Himself, at home in ‘the land of the Trinity’, he is Sovereign of a far greater realm. We must keep always before our eyes that vision of Lady Julian’s in which God carried in His hand a little object like a nut, and that nut was ‘all that is made’”

What a great picture...God at home in “the land of the Trinity” ...where he is Sovereign of a far greater realm than this little nut of a universe in which we are just a small minute spec. If we don’t keep the doctrine of God and his sovereignty and his tri-unity clear...then we fall into dangerous errors of thinking about God like he is a manger or a headmaster or a hotelier.

And then a couple nights later, I was rereading Lewis’ classic *Mere Christianity* as I went to bed. I’ve read it 4 or 5 times, but I had never noticed that the last 1/3 of the book is called *Beyond Personality: or First Steps in the Doctrine of the Trinity*. That got my attention. Again, I wasn’t preparing for a sermon, I was just reading for pleasure, because I tend to think theology unboring and Lewis one of the most unboring theologians ever. And suddenly I was reading these lines – “Everyone has warned me not to tell you what I am going to tell you in this last book. They all say ‘the ordinary reader does not want Theology; give him plain practical religion.’ I have rejected their advice. I do not think the ordinary reader is such a fool. Theology means ‘the science of God’, and I think any man who wants to think about God at all would like to have the clearest and most accurate ideas about Him which are available.”

Lewis rejects the notion that what the ordinary reader wants or needs is practical religion. No, he thinks that they, and you (isn’t that why you are here this morning?) want to think about God and worship God with clear and true ideas about him. But it isn’t but a few pages before Lewis starts getting very PRACTICAL with his THEOLOGY...and it is about the Trinity...so it leapt off

the page at me...so please, bear with me, as I quote just a bit more...because Lewis does such a good job of showing just how practical theology is, and just how important it is that we get our theology right.

“Before going on, notice the practical importance of this. All sorts of people are fond of repeating the Christian statement that ‘God is love’. But they seem not to notice that the words ‘God is love’ have no real meaning unless God contains at least two Persons. Love is something that one person has for another person. If God was a single person, then before the world was made, He was not love. Of course, what these people mean when they that God is love is often something quite different: they really mean ‘Love is God’. They really mean that our feelings of love, however and wherever they arise, and whatever results they produce, are to be treated with great respect. Perhaps they are: but that is something quite different from what Christians mean by the statement ‘God is love’. They believe that the living, dynamic activity of love has been going on in God forever and has created everything else. And that, by the way, is perhaps the most important difference between Christianity and all other religions: that in Christianity God is not a static thing – not even a person – but a dynamic, pulsating activity – a life, almost a kind of drama. Almost, if you will not think me irreverent, a kind of dance...”

Now all of this is a bit of a recap from last week...the significance of the trinity, the tri-personal God of the Bible whom we love and worship and adore as Christians. But it is also a plea...Theology Isn't Boring – Part Deux. Because a Christian who thinks theology is boring is cutting off the branch they are sitting on...the branch that bears their very existence. What would we think of a gardener who thinks roots and water and sunlight are boring because they only like blooms and fruit? Or a roofer who thinks that concrete foundations and 2X4 stud walls are boring? Or a car racer who thinks the marvels of internal combustion pale in comparison to the marvelous round wheel he holds in his hands? Let's not be so foolish my dear Christian friend – theology is anything but boring.

And the theology of the Trinity is one in which we see the inter-personality of God, the love of God, the fullness and completeness of God overflowing out into his creation. We see that the whole idea of unity comes into existence because of the intimate relationship that exists between God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit.

But the love of the Trinity overflowed in creation, and created this world...created you and me. And as we said earlier, cosmic treason and spiritual rebellion among men and women has meant that a world intended to reflect the unity of the Trinity – perfect fellowship between God and man, man within his own soul, and men and women in relationship with each other – instead of reflecting unity has been filled with disunity and strife and chaos.

But the great storyline of the Bible is that God didn't simply leave this world filled with disunity. He broke into the world...God became a man in the person of Jesus Christ and began the process of reunifying all things. I want us to look at the book of Ephesians to see God's Plan for Unity in the world and in the church. So turn to in your Bibles to the book of Ephesians, we are going to spend the rest of our time together this morning there.

And the apostle Paul begins the book of Ephesians with perhaps the greatest theology in the Bible. It is definitely the greatest single sentence in the Bible! Because even though you can't tell in your English Bible...Ephesians 1:3-14 is one long sentence in Greek! I wish we had time to read it all, as Paul tells us of the riches of our salvation and inheritance because of the work of our Triune God. Adoption as sons through Jesus Christ (v. 5), sealed by the Holy Spirit who is the guarantee of our inheritance (v. 13-14), all to the praise and worship of the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ (v. 3). It really is one of the most beautiful bits of theology in the Bible!

And right in the middle of this long run-on sentence is verses 9-10 – look at these verses with me –

David Martin Lloyd-Jones said this about these two verses: “I do not hesitate to assert that we have in these verses the key to understanding the chief practical purpose of the letter to the Ephesians, even more- the entire message of the Bible.” Ephesians 1:9-10 - “...making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth.” God’s desire, his will...this mystery which for long ages had been concealed but which is now being made known – God’s desire is that Jesus Christ would be the one who would bring unity to the universe.

In verses 15-23, we can read one of the most beautiful prayers in the world, as Paul weaves theology and doctrine into a prayer for the church at Ephesus. It is gloriously rich...but we have to skip to the end. Look how Paul ends his prayer in verses 22-23, as he declares the reality of Jesus Christ in our world. “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.”

God’s plan is to unite all things in Christ. He has made Christ supreme in this world. All things are under his feet...he rules over it all. And he has been made the head of the church, which is his body. And here we are this morning as living proof of this biblical text. But how does this happen? How will this happen? Well the next verses in Ephesians, 2:1-10 tell us how...and they are rightly some of the most famous verses in all the Bible. And we see that Jesus Christ is all over these verses...because he is the beginning, the end, the goal of our salvation...it is all about Christ from beginning to end.

But it begins with bad news – with us being dead in trespasses and sins, as we all are, born inheriting the original sin of Adam. V. 3 says we all once lived this way...we were all by our very nature children of wrath. We all have known the disunity in our souls because of our sinful cosmic treason. We’ve

all known the effects of sin because of our broken relationships with others, our broken relationship with God. We contribute to the disunity in the world – we know its devastation, we've caused the devastation. It is a hopeless case...a desperate and bleak case if we are left to ourselves.

But we aren't...thank God we aren't...because then God himself does something, God acts, he reveals the mystery of his plan of redemption into the world. V. 4 – But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ. And look at verse 6 – God raised us up with him and seated us with Christ in the heavenly places...and his kindness towards us in Christ Paul says is a display of God's immeasurably rich grace and kindness. Theology boring? We are dead. God makes us alive. Could it be any more glorious and practical than that?

And then look at how Paul describes Christians in verse 10 – he calls us the workmanship of God. Created how? Created in Christ. Why? For good works which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them. The unity of God comes and does the work of restoration in our lives. We have a restored relationship with God, forgiveness of sins through God's mercy and grace, and a new life of good works. In another place Paul says there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus (Romans 8:1) and that having been justified by faith we have peace with God (Romans 5:1). No condemnation. Peace with God.

But God's unity plan in Christ goes even deeper than that. In the next section of Ephesians, 2:11-22, God shows that the gospel of Jesus Christ is meant to bring unity amongst those who are united with God by grace through faith. And we should notice first that it is a Trinitarian unity...look at verse 18 – “For through him [ed. that is Christ] we both have access in one Spirit to the Father.” Christ brings us into relationship with the Father through the Spirit.

But who is the “both”...verse 18 says, “we both have access”...what is that referring to? We this whole section, vv. 11-22, is about the fact that both Jews and Gentiles have been brought together through the gospel of Jesus Christ. This section is very similar to the previous section...there is a progression very similar to vv. 1-10...you can see it in the words “at one time” in verse 11...“but now” in verse 13...and final “so then you are no longer” in verse 19.

And just as verses 1-10 are about the work of God in bringing salvation to sinners through Christ. This section is about God bringing unity between Jew and Gentile through that same gospel, though the same redeeming work of Christ upon the cross. The heart of the passage is there in vv. 14-16 of chapter 2 – we see that Paul says that what Christ has done has done away with hostility...that word hostility occurs twice here. What God has done in Christ has broken down the dividing wall of hostility that existed between God and man...but then also between Jew and Gentile.

Most of you will know that Jews despised Gentiles...verse 11 says that Jewish called them the “uncircumcision” in a derogatory way. And since before Christ the Jews were God’s chosen people verse 12 tells us the desperate situation Gentiles, non-Jews found themselves in – they were separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel, strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world. Things were desperate for the Gentiles apart from Christ. But now...verse 13...now in Christ those who were far off have now been brought near.

Then these key verses in 14-16 – “For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility.”

These Gentiles...like those dead in trespasses and sins (v. 1)...have become heirs of God through Christ, by the Spirit...look at verse 19 – “So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God.” This is the mystery of God’s will...that in Christ sinful Gentiles and sinful Jews can become saints and have access in one Spirit to the Father. That is how Paul concludes this section in verse 22 with a glorious picture of the people of God, united together in Christ – “In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit”.

This was the goal for the Ephesian church – Jew and Gentile together in Christ by the Spirit. That is the goal for Living Hope church – one church family...from all different backgrounds, with all different talents and abilities...one body, the body of Christ, living out the gospel in our relationships, in this world...to the glory of God the Father. And this is the goal for the world...the end for which God created the world...for a multi-ethnic, multi-cultural bride of Christ worshipping together to the glory of God...

God’s ultimate plan of unity is seen recorded for us in John’s vision in the book of Revelation, 5:9-10 – “Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation, and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth.”

May we as a church begin to live out this unity. May we know the practical theology that has restored us to God through the atoning work of Christ, that has made us new creatures internally with new hearts and minds by the Holy Spirit, and has given us unity together with our brothers and sisters in Christ, no matter whether they are Jew or Gentile, Union or CtK...we are one Body, with one Lord, the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.