

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

We Americans are all about doing. Nike didn't create the cultural trend with its slogan "Just Do It!" Rather, it beautifully summarized and hit the heart of a cultural trend. We are a just do it culture. The fastest growing churches in America are also "just do it" churches. Appealing to the hearts of Americans, their messages on Sunday mornings are all about what you need to change in your life... what you need to do that you are not currently doing. It is a highly appealing message, because we all, deep down inside, want to "just do it." Don't talk, just do.

Don't get me wrong, Christianity most definitely does have a "just do it" aspect. Jesus said, "Blessed are they who hear the word of God AND obey it!" James 1:22 says, "Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says." Martin Luther once said, "Pray as though everything depends on God; then act as though everything depends on you." Do it! Don't just pray it.

Putting our faith into action is a vitally important practice of the Christian faith... something we don't always do. We need those encouragements and reminders. And we will continue to have plenty of such messages here that are going to encourage you to live your Christian faith and to just do it! In fact, we're entering into a season of the church year right now where most of the Sundays are going to trend toward the other end: do it! But I want to take today as the opportunity to especially remember what's at the other end of the pendulum, because it's important!

We human beings have a tendency to go too far in one direction to the neglect of the other side. Imagine the pendulum swinging back and forth, first all the way to one side, then all the way to the other side. I believe the pendulum in popular Christian churches has swung way to one side: the "faith in action" side... the "just do it side."

So, what's on the other side of this pendulum? Listen. Know. Remember. God... for us. So if the other side is "**Go / do / give / pour out**"... this side is "**Stop** (Be still and know that I am God.) / **listen / receive / be filled.**"

A grandfather clock isn't working right if its pendulum is stuck on either side. It's working properly when it swings back and forth. So also, the Christian faith. The balanced message of the Bible is actually the pendulum swinging back and forth. Sometimes encouragements to listen, know and remember. Sometimes encouragements to do. Together they are the Christian faith working and growing.

- Feed your faith. Live your faith.
- Hear the word of God. Obey it.
- Listen. Do what it says.
- Remember God's will and God's promises. Respond to them in your life.
- Know the one true God. Serve the one true God.

When the pendulum gets stuck at one side or the other, faith is broken. Just listening to the Word but not living it... if the pendulum is stuck on that side... the result is hypocrisy and arrogance. ("I have the truth! So I am right and you are wrong! I don't need to live it.") Always focusing just

on the “living for God” side, the “just do it” side is equally destructive. The result is pride and self-trust. I can do it. I can change myself. I can live up to God’s holy expectations. God must be impressed with me!” And the underlying, growing thought is: “I don’t need a Savior so much. Because *I* can do it.” When we “do” lots, but don’t sit at Jesus’ feet much, we have, as the Bible says, “a form of godliness, but we deny is power.” The power from godly living comes from Jesus Christ. In fact, the Christian life, properly understood, is CHRIST in action, not me in action. This concept is lost when we concentrate on actions, and don’t stop and listen to God.

This is a really long introduction just to explain to you that in today’s message, I’m not sending you home with something to *do*. Today we’re all the way over on the “stop, know, listen, hear, receive” side of the pendulum.

You see it’s a Holy Trinity Sunday. It’s a day when we remember the nature of God and praise him for who he is. But there’s not something you now go out and do. There’s not really anything to put into practice in your life. “God is Triune. Father, Son and Holy Spirit! Now, go and do thou likewise!” What? Doesn’t make sense, does it? Since there’s nothing to “do” in connection with this teaching, countless churches around our country and around the world do not observe “Trinity Sunday.” The Triune nature of God is something that is not preached about because there’s nothing there to put into practice in your daily life. So this topic would be considered to be of relative unimportance.

I strongly disagree. And so does our God. God blesses us when we stop. Sit down. And simply know that he is God. Listen to his Word. Marvel at his nature. Contemplate his majesty and glory. Hear of the triune God and his work of saving you. This is what we’re doing today. We’re resting. We’re recharging. We’re being fed. We’re marveling at our God: who he is, how he feels about us and what he’s done for us. This is vitally important! Today is fill-up day. You have to take time to fill up your car with gas or it just won’t go anymore. Today we’re filling up our hearts once again with the triune God and what he’s done for us.

We’re looking at just one verse of the Bible. It’s a verse of the Bible, that, if you come to our church regularly, you’ve heard many times. It’s one of the blessings we use at the end of our services. It comes from the very end of Paul’s second letter to the congregation that had formed in the city of Corinth. So, we’re in 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians, chapter 13, verse 14: **“May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.”**

I’ll be honest. I don’t love this translation. It sounds like a wish. You know, when someone leaves and you say something to wish them well? This translation sounds like that, but it’s not! “Have a good trip!” But whether they do or don’t is not in your hands. You just hope they do. “Have a good day!” “Good luck!” Same thing. We might think this is the same: “May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with you! Maybe it will, maybe it won’t... but we sure hope it will be with you! Good luck with that!” Is that what we have here? No! In fact, a literal translation would reveal this to be what it actual is, a reassuring statement of an accomplished fact. Here’s how it reads super literally: “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit... with you all.” Paul intended this to be a reminder of the blessings that belonged to the Corinthian church... blessings from the triune God. Not blessings he hoped God might give them. But blessings that were theirs. Accomplished fact.

Let's look at each of these blessings that is ours through the triune God. 1) The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ... is with you. Grace is one of those theological terms that we just don't use in every day English... at least not the way it's used in the Bible. We might say someone has grace. By that we mean *elegance or beauty*. That's not what we're talking about. Grace as used in the Bible means favor, good will... or undeserved kindness. Someone deserves the opposite, but kindness is given. That's grace. You blow it big at work, and you deserve to be fired. Instead the boss gives you a bonus. Your jaw drops. You don't get it. You just got grace.

So also, with God, we deserve his worst. We live disobediently. We do what we want, not what he wants. He should let us have it. He should lay into us, shout at us, revoke all privileges. No, worse. He should fire us from his eternal presence. Literally... fire us... in hell. If he did, we couldn't object and claim he's being unfair. We'd have to shut our mouths and take it, knowing it's what we had coming.

But instead, "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ... with you. Undeserved kindness... which has as its owner and source, the Lord Jesus Christ. Here's a passage that summarizes the grace of Jesus in the most vivid terms: "While we were still sinners, Christ died for us." While we were disobedient, hateful toward God, refusing to bow to his will, opposing him to his face people, Christ died for us. Went to a cross. Took our guilt. Accepted our punishment. And he died. For us. On our behalf. In place of us. That's grace. Undeserved kindness.

And we sit here with our mouths on the floor and ask, "Why? How could you? I mean, Thank you! But... why?"

Answer: "The love of God." The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. With you." "The love of God... with you." This answers the question "why" that we ask when we see the undeserved kindness of Christ. Why would he do this for us? Because of the love of God.

The word for love here is "Agape." It's more specific than our word for love. We can love our spouse, and love ice cream. Greek has different words for love and they're more focused in meaning. The word here is the kind of love in which the reason or cause cannot be found in the object of the love. We humans almost always love because of a reason or cause in the person we are loving. We love them because... they are kind to us, adore us, buy us stuff, make us feel good. I get something from them, therefore I love them.

Agape love is completely different. It is love offered independently of what the object of love is doing. It is a love that is produced purely because the source of the love decides to love. It's something we don't experience very often. "Why do you love him/her?" How often do you hear the answer, "Because I chose to." No, I mean, why do you love them? What did he / she do for you? What characteristic caused your love?" And you answer, "You're not listening. There was not action, and there's no characteristic. I simply love them because I chose to." Sounds strange, doesn't it? That's God's love for us.

God chose to love us. He bound himself to love us. And that love moved him to send his son who showed grace to us in saving us. Just as that grace of the Lord Jesus Christ is with you. (Fact.) So also, the (undeserved, unearned, choice-of-God) love is also with you. It is. This is the reality.

And the third things: "The fellowship of the Holy Spirit. With you." This one is hardest. What does it mean? When we hear the word fellowship, we might think of game night at church. But fellowship simply means: "Close relationship."

Last week we talked about the amazing work of the Holy Spirit. He's the one who creates faith in us and strengthens that faith through the Word of God which he inspired and through baptism and the Lord's Supper. The Holy Spirit works in us pulling us close to God, pulling us into a close relationship with the almighty God. God promises us that the Holy Spirit is at our side. He promise that the Holy Spirit is dwelling in us. The Bible says that our bodies are temples... temples in which the Holy Spirit dwells. How much closer of a relationship can there be? He is in you! In you your heart, filling you with the spiritual life of God.

Sometimes life gets difficult. Life in a sinful world means there will be suffering. When we suffer, we sometimes feel that God is far from us... that God has left us and abandoned us. But this one verse dispels that myth and reminds us it's just not true. The fellowship... the close relationship of the Holy Spirit... is with you. He is there for you and there with you. He is there to comfort you, strengthen you and help you... whatever you deal with in this world of sorrows. You are never alone. You always have a close relationship... the close relationship of the Holy Spirit. Always. It's a fact. It is true.

Friends, when you leave today, I won't send you on your way with a list of things to do or ways to change your life. Today in church the pendulum was not on the "Just do it" side. Instead, I send you on your way with truths and facts from God that I would like you to stop and enjoy. Be still and know. Listen. Hear. Rest. Receive. Believe. The undeserved kindness of the Lord Jesus Christ, proven at the cross, and the unconditional, independent love of God for you, and the close relationship of the Holy Spirit who is your helper, comforter, and faith builder... these are with you. God promises.

Amen.