

At the first part of this sermon, we have to talk about what is easily the most difficult doctrine in our faith, and that's the doctrine of the Trinity. And so we're going to look at that, and then we're going to go from the triune God of the universe into where we need to go. So let's start in John, we're going to pick it up in verse 14. "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, . . ." You'll notice there that the word "Word" is capitalized there as the name of somebody. Who are we talking about here? Jesus. If you're new to church, always guess "Jesus" and in a round about way, you will be right. "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth. (John bore witness about him, and cried out, "This was he of whom I said, 'He who comes after me ranks before me, because he was before me.'")" So all that has happening here is the New Testament is unpacking Jesus, not as a prophet or a teacher but as God Himself. So John the Baptist says, "This Jesus is who I told you about who, although I am older than He is, came before me. This is a tie back to His deity. You're going to see that completely here in a couple of other verses. "And from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father's side, he has made him known." Now I can't believe I'm about to say this about the ESV because I'm such a fan of it. It's a word for word translation, but they did a poor job here. The ESV is saying that He's at the Father's side, which is really an inaccurate. In the Greek, it's really saying that He is from the Father's bosom. Those are two different ideas, are they not? Like Bleecker is a very dear friend of mine, and I'd never mind being at his side. Whether that's at a movie or if we're together in a fight, I never mind being at his side. I love him, he's one of my best friends, but I want no part of his bosom. I just want to be open and honest with you. The phrase bosom doesn't even work in our culture. We don't even have anything like it. It's an ancient metaphor for "a part of" or "intimately entwined." So he's saying, "Nobody has ever seen God the Father, but we have seen the Son." We know later in Colossians 1 that "He is the image of the invisible God," right? He is in the Father's bosom, which means there's an entanglement between these two. There is a deeply intimate entanglement between God the Father and God the Son.

Flip over to John 16. We're going to pick it up in verse 12. Jesus says, "I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you. All that the Father has is mine; therefore I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you." Now here is a perfect, head-exploding explanation of the Trinity. All that the Father has distinctly is the Son's distinctly and He gives it to us through the Spirit distinctly. So all that is belongs to God who, as God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit, unpacks it to us.

One more and then I think we'll be moving. Turn the page over to John 17. We're going to pick it up in verse 1. "When Jesus had spoken these words, he lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, "Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son that the Son may glorify you, since you have given him authority over all flesh, to give eternal life to all whom you have given him." Now we just read in chapter 16 that that eternal life is given through whom? The Holy Spirit. Let's keep going. "And this is eternal life, that they know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent. I glorified you on earth, having accomplished the work that you gave me to do. And now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed." So here's the picture we get of the triune God. Distinct yet one: there is one God in three Persons, and within that triune God, there is no hierarchy. So you've got to get out of your head that God the Father is on a giant golden throne and that the Son is on a little golden throne that's kind of cute next to His

Dad's golden throne and that the Holy Spirit doesn't even get a little throne but He just does stuff. You've got to get that out of your head because that's not how the Bible teaches the Trinity to function. But rather, there is no hierarchy but all is given and all is received. So the Father says, "The Son. . .the Son. . .the Son," the Son says, "The Father. . .the Father. . .the Father," the Spirit says, "Jesus, who will get you to the Father," and they've got this constant exaltation of the other occurring. C.S. Lewis called it "the dance," where the Father is constantly glorifying the Son who is constantly glorifying the Father where the Spirit is constantly glorifying the Son so that the Son might attach them to the Father, and all of them give, all of them receive, no one is in debt and there is no hierarchy. This is the God of the Universe.

Now flip back to Genesis 1. We're going to pick it up in verse 26. "Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, . . ."" Okay, so the Trinity is not a doctrine that creeps into being in the 3rd century. At some point, you are going to have to not believe everything you hear on The Discovery Channel. "Let us make man." We're in Genesis; there is no one to talk to yet. Unless He's talking to plants and seeds, there's no one to talk to, and yet He just said, "Let us make man in our image." Okay, so the Triune God of the universe says, "Let us, God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit, make man in our image," and then He goes on to say, "In our likeness, let us make him." And then it goes on to say They made man and woman, put them in the garden and told them to be fruitful and multiply. Now, you can get a little more detail about how this plays itself out by getting up high and looking at chapter 2. So let's look over in Genesis 2. We'll pick it up in verse 18. God makes the man and then says this, "Then the LORD God said, "It is not good. . ."" That is the first time we hear those words "not good" in Scripture. Because up until this point, God makes it and it's good, and then He says, "It is not good that the man should be alone." So in Genesis 1, God says, "Let Us make man in Our image," in Genesis 2, He makes man and says, "This is not good" as in, "This is not in Our image just yet." So let's read the rest of it. "'I will make him a helper fit for him." Now out of the ground the LORD God had formed every beast of the field and every bird of the heavens and brought them to the man to see what he would call them. And whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name. The man gave names to all livestock and to the birds of the heavens and to every beast of the field. But for Adam there was not found a helper fit for him. So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. And the rib that the LORD God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. Then the man said, "This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.'" Now look at verse 24 because we're going to fix the "It's not good for man to be alone." "Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed." The triune God of the universe, perfect and in community within Himself as one yet distinctly three, says, "Let Us make man in Our image," He creates a singular human being and says it's not good for him to be alone. Why would He know that? Because the image of God is three in one, correct? So He makes another human, this one a little bit different, and puts them in the garden. And here's this really beautiful part. They're naked, and they're unashamed. Can I unpack that for you? They have nothing to hide from God or each other. So at the end of Genesis 2, everything is good, between us and God and between each other. We have right standing with God and have right standing with one another, and this is what the Hebrews would call shalom. It's amazing and it lasts about 15 seconds.

Now in Genesis 3, sin enters into the world, and it literally fractures the makeup of the creative order. We talk about this all the time. So not only is there now a schism between us and God, but it's also going to cause problems between man and man. So not only is there going to be a fracture in our relationship with God, but there's going to be a fracture in our relationship with one another. You'll be able to see this in a couple of ways. One is when God begins to curse the earth because of the Fall and He says to the woman, "You're going to have some issues with your man." And He says to the man, "Everything you were meant to cultivate, including your wife, is going to war against you. I'm going to teach you the gospel this way." And then, just so you can see how it gets out of the male/female relationship and into the humanity relationship, the whole rest of the Bible is a story of how mankind is self-seeking, self-exalting, resource-hording

murderers. That's the whole rest of the Bible. And just for secular argument, what's on the homepage of CNN.com right now? Here's what you'll see: murder, theft, self-exaltation and hoarding of resources. You'll find it right on the homepage of CNN.com. We don't have to go Bible; we can go CNN. Oh sorry, I forgot we're in Dallas. We can go to FoxNews.com, and it will be right on the homepage. G.K. Chesterton says, "Total depravity is the only doctrine we have that has thousands of years of history to support it." The whole rest of the Bible shows that not only have we been fractured in our relationship with the Lord, but we've been fractured in our relationship with one another. When push comes to shove, we will abuse one another, we will take advantage of one another, we will murder one another and we will betray one another. It just takes the right stressors, and we will betray any covenant that we have entered into with any other human being.

Now turn over to Colossians 1. We're going to pick it up in verse 13. "[God the Father] has delivered us from the domain of darkness. . ." What does he mean by the domain of darkness? The domain of darkness is the sinful, fallenness of the world where we are fractured in our relationship with the Lord and in our relationship with one another. He is talking about a world we live in where we are hiding and ashamed instead of naked and unashamed. So God the Father "He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins." So He's referencing the cross of Christ. Now he's going to get into Jesus. "He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him.

And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent. For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross." So follow me here. The triune God of the universe says, "Let Us make man in Our image," He creates a singular man, says this is not good, creates another human being and puts them together to create other human beings. Then sin enters into the world and fractures our relationship with God and with each other to where, when push comes to shove, we will betray God and we will betray one another. All we need is the right stressors. In fact, to betray God, we don't even need the right stressors. We're actually born into rebellion. Then Colossians, as well as the rest of the gospel narratives, is going to tell us that in the cross of Jesus Christ not only are we reconciled to God, but to one another as well. So the gospel, the good news that Jesus died for our sins creates new hearts and new minds, and it also creates new community. The gospel of Christ reconciles us to God and one another not to be a subculture but to be a counterculture community right in the middle of culture.

Let me try to talk about it like this. Gospel community should look a specific way. Gospel community has certain nuances where if it doesn't look like that, it's not gospel community. I'll give you an example of what I'm talking about. There are three ways to define what gospel community is. Gospel community freely gives of itself for the good of others. Now we know this because we have been made in the image of God, and within God Himself, He freely gives of Himself for the good of others. This is God the Father glorifying the Son, this is the Son glorifying the Father and this is the Spirit glorifying the Son. Nobody puts anybody into debt. All freely give, all freely receive, all give of themselves for the glorification of the other. We have been made in this image. So to be reconciled to God and to one another means that we freely give of ourselves for the good of others. That's gospel community. So to simplify it, I think it looks two ways. In gospel community, we delight in one another. Here's what that means. I celebrate your strengths. I'm not threatened by them. I'm grateful for your strengths and who God to be. It means we spend time together as believers. We celebrate together as believers. And where this does not happen, jealousy will lead to an overly critical spirit that will erode the foundation of deep intimacy and relationship.

Let's say a man and woman joined our fellowship, and the man was just tremendously godly and had the Bible memorized, applied all of it and just made us all look like schmucks. And let's say his wife could sing with such a talent that beauty just fell out of her mouth. Gospel community doesn't have every other woman that sings going, "Oh no, what's going to happen to me?" Instead, gospel community celebrates her gifts and the fact that we'll be stronger and better for it. Do you see the divide? Gospel community means that you're not threatened by the gifts of others. You celebrate it because it makes us better. In gospel community, we don't judge ourselves based on others; we judge ourselves in obedience to what Christ has for us. We don't want to be the next anything; we want to be us. That's gospel community. It delights in one another.

Let's use marriage as an example. Here's one of the ways that marriage really starts to disintegrate. One of the spouses will take their strengths and compare them to the other spouse's weaknesses. So they go, "I do this well, I do this well, I do this well and I do this well. He/she doesn't do this well, doesn't do this well, doesn't do this well and doesn't do this well. You see? I deserve better." No, you're an idiot. You're a lying idiot who is taking your strengths and comparing it to your spouse's weaknesses. And if you had any courage at all, you'd take your weaknesses and lay them on your spouse's weaknesses and come to realize that you're both sinners in need of grace and patience. I'm telling you, what I just set up for you is the beginning of an affair. Because what happens is you go, "Oh, I do all these good things and they do all of these stinky things. Oh, and look at this person over here. Look at all of their strengths." How about you look at your spouse's strengths? And so if you take that out of the marriage relationship and just put it on all relationships, the gospel should transcend all of that, and we should always be looking for strengths to encourage. We should always be able to go, "Man, this guy brings this to the community. It's a beautiful gift." We should always be going, "Man, we love that this is what you do. We love that this is what you have." Gospel community is a delighting community.

The second way I would define how we freely give to others is not only do we delight in one another, but we help each other in times of need. And I'm not just talking about physical need. One of the painful realities of being a young church is that, when we go to the hospital, it's rarely for adults, and when we go to the funeral home, it's rarely for adults. Over the last seven years, there have been a multitude of times I've done nothing but sit in a room for hours and said nothing and just be there. Gospel community practices the ministry of presence when people are hurting. We help one another in the dark night of the soul. Do you know what I'm talking about? I know none of us have experienced doubt and fear. I know we just memorize the Bible and sing worship songs all day, but let's pretend that doubt creeps in occasionally. Gospel community encourages the down hearted, it encourages the the doubters and the fear. That's what gospel community does. And on the practical side, gospel community helps when there's physical needs. Gospel community pays the rent when the rent can't be paid. That's not a metaphor. Gospel community takes care of the other two kids when H1N1 invades the house of their friend. One of the cool little things that I've noticed here is all the babies that have been born here these last couple of years. Having a child is a beautiful nightmare for the first couple of months. If you think that's just cruel, have a baby. It's a really beautiful, "Oh, isn't God good," nightmare. And one of the things I've seen is the community has just been really quick to do things like make dinner for the new parents for the first few weeks. We might not make sure you sleep, but we'll make sure you eat. How small is that, but how big is that? Gospel community freely gives of itself for the good of others, we delight in one another and we help each other when we're in need.

Gospel community is a community built on and walking in equality. Here's what I mean. There is no master race, there is no master culture and there is no master socioeconomic status. The beauty of gospel community is that it is integrated at every level of existence. It means that the poor sit along side the rich in harmony. It means that the educated walk with and know the uneducated. It means that the black man, the white man, the Asian man, the Hispanic man and all the other colors that are created as interracial couples are married with God's delight walk with each other. I know I'm going to get this e-mail, so I might as well answer it now. It will go something like this, "What about when Moses says, 'Come out and be separate?'" That had nothing to do with race and had everything to do with religion and the worship

of false gods. And if you want to do it like that, then I have some other texts I would like to interpret that way. I don't think you want to play the literal game in that book. If you do, we're going to have to drag your kid out in the parking lot and kill him for not obeying you. Do we want to do that? So there is equality. There is no hierarchy. We see that in the Trinity. There is no, "This is it." No, Christ is it. We've got nothing. We're all slaves to righteousness, so there's not a better slave than another slave. We're all sinners in need of grace. Gospel community is diverse at every level of being. Now sometimes we don't see that in our churches. It's a funny argument when people go, "We need to diversify." Well, we need communities to diversify first. If you plant a church in a predominantly white area, you're going to have a predominantly white church, correct? If you plant a church in a predominantly black area, you're going to have a predominantly black church. I don't think I need to keep going here. I think you've got the point. So what's happening is the white people don't have anywhere else to go. They keep white flighting and now there's nowhere for them to go, unless they want to go to Oklahoma, and let's face it, nobody wants to go to Oklahoma. So as our communities become more diverse, our churches are becoming more diverse. It's a beautiful thing, it's a God-begotten thing and I'm grateful for it. Gospel community is built on equality.

And then biblical community is a community made up of men and women who commune deeply with one another. They do live deeply with one another. The Bible says that we would rejoice with those who rejoice (Romans 12:15). Well you can't do that unless you know them, unless they know you. We are to mourn with those who mourn. You can't do that unless you know them and they know you. So gospel community does life deeply together. Now, this one is the problem. With the first two, there's little pockets here and there, but this last one is difficult because, for whatever reason, we've redefined church to mean some place you go rather than some place you belong. So once you switch meanings like this, this idea of gospel community of doing life deeply with one another really takes a hit. And here's how we really grow in maturity in our faith.

Let me show you how this really hurts your development as a believer. Look in 1 Corinthians 12 with me. We're going to read verses 4-7. "Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone." Can we testify that this is true? Not everybody has the same gifts; not everybody has the same strengths. If you've ever heard somebody teach who isn't a teacher, it's painful, isn't it? Some of you may be living it right now. My wife and I don't watch a lot of television, but we watch American Idol for the first two weeks because it's such a beautiful picture of what happens when community is not honest, when community does not love enough to go, "Yeah, I don't think you should try out." It's an absolute sociological study of what happens when community lies. Because those people were encouraged to go out there and make fools of themselves by their friends and family. Let's keep going. Verse 7, "To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good." As individuals, we are given the manifestation of the Spirit, which means that our natural aptitudes, our natural giftings are ignited by the Holy Spirit and begin to manifest. I'll give you a couple of examples. There are three worship leaders at the Village who do main stage stuff: Michael Bleecker here, John Warren up on Denton and Isaac Wimberly down in Dallas. If you talk to them, none of them picked up the acoustic guitar and said, "What I would like to do with my musical ability is worship and praise God all of my days." They picked up in college that if they played an instrument, the girls like that. And so they bought a cheap guitar, a Hootie & the Blowfish CD and were off and running. They wanted to be the guy at the camp out to pull out the guitar and go, "Here's a little something. I just wrote this." They wanted to be that guy, so they picked it up. Now what became clear in all three of them very early on is they all had an aptitude for it. So music came naturally to them. They didn't have to work as hard.

They could do a bar chord when nobody else could do a bar chord. Now what happened is they were filled with the Holy Spirit, the Holy Spirit pointed them to Jesus who reconciled them to God and in that, the manifestation of the Spirit was built and manifest itself in that art form. You see this in other places, such as the intellect. That's what you saw in C.S. Lewis, the manifestation of the Holy Spirit in his intellect. With others, it has occurred in art. We could just go on an on

within the domains of society. Natural aptitudes and giftings just begin to make sense when when the Holy Spirit ignites them. So for me, I had this weird brain that could remember anything I read, I saw the world in a different place and yet I was always in trouble. I could remember everything I read, but had to do the 8th grade twice. Think about that. That's what happens when you tell your teacher, "Not necessarily!" a lot. So I've got this weird brain, the Holy Spirit fills me and now it makes sense. And here's what the text is saying. To each one of us, the manifestation of the Spirit was given for the common good. This means that for me to be all that I need to be and am going to be, I need you, and for you to be all that you are going to be, you need me. There are a variety of gifts and a variety of activities, and we need one another.

So how do we get into gospel community? I think there are some things that make it really difficult for us. The first one is our Western culture is one of busyness. We value it and exalt it. If you don't believe me, for the next 48 hours, as you say hi to everyone you know, ask them how they are and keep score how many of them answer, "I'm busy, I'm slammed, I'm dying, so much to do. . ." This is a value system of us. It's as if we're not busy, we're not valuable. So it's in our language and in our lifestyle, and it's a lie that must be repented of. Deep community will not happen where you value busyness and doing over being with other people.

We have to repent of busyness, and I think we have to repent of materialism. Here's something that I have learned, and I could be wrong, but I don't think that I am. It's not just the stuff that we want, but it's getting the stuff. It's not just the big house that we have, but it's that we worked and slaved and spent to get that house. We really love that. So what happens when you sacrifice genuine, deep relationships in the pursuit of more and more and more stuff is you'll never pay the price to get into and spend the time necessary to find gospel community.

I think laziness kills us. I woke up this morning, ate breakfast and took my vitamins. I did not wake up this morning and take my vitamins. Vitamins were not meant to sustain me; they were meant to supplement me. That's why they're called supplements. In the same way, social networking is a supplement to relationships; it is not the replacement of them. I noticed this first when I was in college, as soon as America On-line came out with instant messaging. I noticed that you would find yourself sitting down at the computer typing, "What's up?" "Nothing. What are you doing?" "Just in my dorm room." And the person you're chatting with is nine feet away from you, two doors down from you. The old metaphor for the United States is that we were the melting pot of the world. Well it's no longer the melting pot; it's far more like the cocktail party. You walk around and know everyone's name but you know no one. So this creates a great deal of loneliness despite the fact that we're surrounded by people. Laziness is a problem. It takes time, energy and effort to walk in deep relationships with other men and women.

And then here's the big one and the reason why we always have to come back to the cross, we always have to come back to what Jesus did for us. If you're hiding and ashamed, intimacy is impossible. If you're hiding and ashamed, if you have not put your faith in Christ alone, reconciling you to God and you are still trying to walk in the religious system of self-merit, you will never be able to be open and honest about where you struggle, where you have fallen and what you need. The reason this is so important is because our sanctification, our growth into maturity is on the line here. Small groups isn't going to solve this, is it? Small groups and biblical community are not synonymous. No singular system is going to solve this. It will have to be pursued, fought for, prioritized, we'll have to surrender and sacrifice for it. And once we've got it, how beautiful of a thing it is. Do you know that the book of Ecclesiastes says a dozen times that to cook and eat a good dinner and drink good wine with good, God loving friends is a holy thing? Isn't that weird? Because for the Evangelical, here's what we think, "Quiet time, evangelism and not using bad words, those are holy." The Bible says, "Dinner, friends, good food, good wine, being not doing, that's holy. Smelling, that's holy. Seeing, that's holy. Good music, that's holy." You see, it rolls it out to this holistic experience of being, and we've boiled it down to doing. We'll talk at length about that in a few weeks when to Sabbath and solitude.

So for now, may we be reconciled to God and, in that reconciliation, be reconciled to one another. May we delight in one another, may jealousy and over criticism die at the altar, may we care for the needs of one another, may we practice and walk in equality and may we commune deeply with one another. If you're lonely in here, if you long for this in here, you will have to take some steps. People don't fall into community; they pursue it. Maybe that starts with Recovery. I don't know that there's a better place where this is exhibited than our Recovery ministry. Maybe that's small group, maybe that's just you gathering a couple of your friends around. I can tell you, my wife loves a fire in the fireplace. If it gets below 81°F, she's burning something in there. We love to do that and have over good friends and do nothing, just sit on the couch and talk. I never want to paint a picture for you that's not reality. We don't sit around and go, "Well, let's talk about Calvin's influence over the Reformation in the 1500's." That's not what we do. I mean, sometimes that comes up, but most of the time, we talk about our kids, we plan their arranged marriages, we talk about going on vacations together or sometimes we talk about where we're worried. Maybe we'll cook something, but we just sit around for a couple of hours and talk. It's gospel community. In the middle of it, somebody may say, "I've noticed lately that you've been trending this way. Are you alright?" In the middle of it, somebody could go, "Yeah, I'm worried about that for my daughter too. Let's just stop and pray." You see, gospel community is never embarrassed that it's spiritual community. This is not complex. There are parts of theology that are really complex and hard to apply. This isn't one of them. So may you want it badly enough to seek it, and may God, who created you in this image, be merciful to you in your pursuit.

Let's pray. "Father, I thank You for these men and women, and I thank You for just the opportunity to talk about life together. Some of us need to repent because we're jealous and overly critical, and that's one of the things that kills community for us. Others of us need to confess and repent because we're brash and brazen, and that reveals that we don't really care for other people. We just care to be heard and we're not giving and, even in the pursuit of community, we're takers only. And some of us need to repent because we still feel shame and haven't been able to lay that at Your cross. Some of us have been lazy, and some of us have been afraid. You build deep life here at the Village and deep community that goes well beyond groups. You build a real belonging here, a ferocious commitment to one another and to You. Help us. It's for Your beautiful name I pray. Amen."