

Restored Together

Bible reference for sermon 2 Corinthians 13:11-13

¹¹ Finally, brothers and sisters, farewell. Be restored; listen to my appeal; agree with one another; live in peace; and the God of love and peace will be with you.¹² Greet one another with a holy kiss. All the saints greet you.

¹³ The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with all of you.

Paul's closing words to the Corinthians come after conflict, disappointment, bruised relationships, and the threat of division. This is not a peaceful church writing itself into history. This is a wounded church struggling to stay together. And perhaps that is why these final verses are so precious. They are not naïve words. They are words spoken into fracture by someone who still believes reconciliation is possible because God is still at work.

“Be restored... agree with one another ... live in peace; and the God of love and peace will be with you.” And then those familiar words: “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with all of you.” A wonderful expression of the Trinity.



On Trinity Sunday, we often feel pressure to explain the Trinity, as though God were a theological puzzle to solve. But the Trinity is not really about formulas or abstract metaphysics. The Trinity is about relationship. It tells us that at the heart of reality is not isolation, but communion. Not loneliness, but love shared eternally.

Father, Son, and Holy Spirit exist in what theologians have called perichoresis — a mutual sharing of life and love — a mutual indwelling, an eternal giving and receiving of love. The persons of the Trinity are not competitors. They do not grasp for power over one another. They exist in self-giving relationship, each delighting in the other. God's very being is communion. And we are made in the image of this God.

Human beings are not created for isolation, suspicion, or division. We are created for relationship: with God, with one another, and with creation itself. Sin fractures those relationships. Grace restores them. That is why Paul's appeal to the Corinthians is not merely “try harder to get along.” He is calling them back into the life of God itself. “Live in peace,” he says, because peace is the very life of the Triune God. “Agree with one another,” because

unity belongs to God's own nature. "Be restored," because reconciliation is the work God is carrying out in Christ.

This year, Trinity Sunday falls close to National Reconciliation Week here in Australia.

Maybe we all have different reactions to issues of reconciliation here in Australia. Maybe it produces a strong reaction in you, maybe it does in me too. Today I want to strip this way from politics and look at how reconciliation might work for us as Christians and as Australians.



A bit of background. The theme for 2026 is All In. It is a call for all Australians to commit wholeheartedly to reconciliation every single day. National

Reconciliation Week invites us to remember two important moments in Australia's journey toward justice in Australia's journey toward justice: **May 27 commemorates the 1967 Referendum**, when Australians voted to recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in the national census. **June 3 marks the 1992 Mabo decision**, which overturned the false doctrine of terra nullius - the claim that this land belonged to no one before colonisation. And perhaps there could hardly be a more fitting theme to sit alongside today's reading.

Because reconciliation and restoration are never passive. Paul knows this. The Corinthians know this. Anyone who has lived through conflict knows this. Reconciliation is holy work. Difficult work. Costly work. It asks us to examine ourselves honestly rather than simply blame others. It asks us to listen before we defend ourselves. It asks us to surrender pride, resentment, and the desire to win. Reconciliation always involves dying to something so that new life may emerge. We see this in Jesus dying on the cross, as Paul tells us in Romans 5:8-11,

⁸ But God proves his love for us in that while we still were sinners Christ died for us. ⁹ Much more surely, therefore, since we have now been justified by his blood, will we be saved through him from the wrath of God. ¹⁰ For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, much more surely, having been reconciled, will we be saved by his life. ¹¹ But more than that, we even boast in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.

Reconciliation. Restoration. Communion.

Australia continues to carry deep wounds from our history: dispossession, violence, stolen children, silenced cultures, broken promises, and generations of injustice experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Reconciliation is not merely about polite acknowledgment of these realities. It is about truth-telling, justice, healing, and transformed relationships.

And importantly, as this year's theme reminds us, reconciliation is not solely the burden of First Nations people. For too long, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities have carried the exhausting labour of explaining pain, advocating for justice, preserving culture, and inviting the rest of the nation into honest conversation. All In reminds us that reconciliation requires participation from all Australians.

Not spectators. Participants. Not tokenism. Commitment. Not guilt without action. But transformed relationships shaped by humility, listening, and courage.

And perhaps this is where the Trinity speaks most powerfully. The Trinity reminds us that relationship lies at the centre of existence itself. God is not distant self-sufficiency. God is eternal communion. Therefore, any ideology that isolates us from one another, diminishes others, or protects our own comfort at the expense of another's dignity is ultimately contrary to the life of God. The Triune God moves outward in love. The Father sends the Son. The Son gives himself for the world. The Spirit gathers strangers into communion. The life of God is always moving toward reconciliation. And the church is called to reflect that divine life.

Paul understood that the Corinthians' divisions were not merely interpersonal disagreements. Their fractured relationships threatened the witness of the Gospel itself. When Christians surrender themselves to bitterness, factionalism, or hostility, they deny with their lives the God they proclaim with their lips.

The same danger exists for the church today. We live in an increasingly polarised world. Public life and politics often reward outrage rather than understanding. Social media encourages performance over listening. Fear and suspicion become easier than compassion. Even churches can become places where people retreat into camps instead of communities.

Yet Paul's words remain stubbornly hopeful:

“Live in peace; and the God of love and peace will be with you.”

Biblical peace — shalom — is not simply the absence of tension. It is the presence of restored relationship. It is the flourishing that comes when people are rightly related to God and to one another. And this kind of peace is only possible because of grace.

“The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ...”

Grace means God does not abandon us to our brokenness. Christ does not wait for humanity to become lovable before entering the world. He comes among sinners. He touches lepers. He eats with outcasts. He forgives enemies from the cross. Grace is reconciliation initiated by God. And then Paul speaks of

“The love of God. “Not abstract love, but the fierce and faithful love that refuses to let division have the final word. And finally,

“The communion of the Holy Spirit.”

The Spirit does not merely comfort individuals privately. The Spirit creates community. The Spirit gathers diverse people into one body.

At Pentecost, the Spirit did not erase difference. People still spoke different languages. But they were brought into mutual understanding. Diversity remained, yet communion became possible. That is the vision of the church. Not sameness. Not uniformity. But reconciled community. The church should be one of the few places left in society where people who would otherwise never sit together actually become family. Old and young. Rich and poor. Conservative and progressive. Indigenous and non-Indigenous. People whose histories and experiences differ profoundly — yet who are bound together by the grace of Christ.

And this work is ongoing. Paul's command to "be restored" matters because reconciliation is never only something we accomplish ourselves. It is also something God does within us. God restores hearts. God restores communities. God restores dignity. God restores hope. There is a temptation to despair when reconciliation feels impossible. The divisions can seem too deep. The wounds too old. The mistrust too entrenched. The congregation at Corinth probably felt that way. And perhaps parts of Australia feel that way too. But the Gospel insists that resurrection remains possible precisely where death appears final. That is the strange hope Christians carry. Not optimism based on human goodness. But hope grounded in the character of God. The God who brought life from the tomb can also bring healing where relationships have shattered. The God whose very being is communion can teach divided people to live together again. This does not happen magically. Reconciliation requires truth. Repentance. Listening. Patience. Courage. Justice. Sometimes lament.

But Christians do not undertake this work alone. "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all." And perhaps that is our calling this Trinity Sunday and this National Reconciliation Week: not merely to admire reconciliation as an idea, but to participate in it. To be all in. All in for the hard, holy work of reconciliation. The work of reconciliation that Christ has already achieved on the cross. Because this is deeper than social aspiration or political debate. It is participation in the life of God.

The Trinity is not a doctrine locked away in theological textbooks. The Trinity is the living reality into which we are baptised: a communion of grace, love, and fellowship that overflows into the world. And every time the church chooses forgiveness over resentment, understanding over suspicion, peace over hostility, and relationship over division, we bear witness to that divine life. Not perfectly. But faithfully. And so today, as Paul's words echo once more through the church, they become both blessing and calling: "Live in peace; and the God of love and peace will be with you." And may indeed "the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit" be with us all. Amen.

Video of the service including the above address can be found on the St Paul's Lutheran Church Youtube page <https://www.youtube.com/@stpaulslutheranchurchboxhi1133>