

Sermon reading

We read the text for today's sermon in the second letter,
that Paul sent to the Corinthians,
chapter 13 - verses 11-14

2. Corinthians 13:11-14

English reading (New International Version)

I will also read the text as it is written in the Bible,
that we use in Malawi.

It is called Buku Lopatulika – the sacred book:

11. Chotsalira, abale, kondwerani.

Muchitidwe angwiro; mutonthozedwe;

khalani a mtima umodzi, khalani mumtendere;

ndipo Mulungu wa chikondi ndi mtendere akhale pamodzi ndi inu.

12. Mupatsane moni ndi chipsompono chopatulika.

13. Oyera mtima onse akupatsani moni.

14. Chisomo cha Ambuye Yesu Khristu,

ndi chikondi cha Mulungu,

ndi chiyanjano cha Mzimu Woyera

zikhale ndi inu nonse.

May God bless our hearts through these words.

Amen.

Let us join together, confessing our faith in the apostles' creed!

**Sermon on Trinity Sunday
Hanover International Worship
16th of June 2019**

Let's pray!

May these words be to your service, oh God.

Amen

1. Intro

Dear siblings, rejoice!

What an end of that letter of Paul.

Actually, what a beginning of the end of the letter – rejoice.

After he spent most of the time debating and complaining in the letter.

Those Corinthians were a bunch of troublemakers.

Faith superheroes and rich snobs,

Differing factions and subgroups.

You know...

People just like you and me.

Today, on this Trinity Sunday

we read how Paul chooses to greet his special friends there.

Paul talks about God

2. Who is God?

I myself, am thinking about God – a lot.

and she is thinking about me – all the time.

She knows me much better

And I just start to understand her

He is quite mysterious – and intriguing

I wonder about his power.

She, sure has a lot of energy

Sorry, do I confuse you?

Who am I talking about?

she, her, his, him...

Who is this god?

Three in one - trinity

Persons

Ways of being

Destination of my prayers

Mother, father, brother, sister,...

Closest friend

Breath in my lungs

Air around me

Tailwind

Wild goose and peaceful dove

Ubunthu

Maker of all

Face of the stranger

Face of the strangest neighbor

Shalom

Flow in all things

Disruptor and provocateur

Savior

Arm around me and hand on my shoulder

Hug

Holy kiss

High five

Fellowship, love and grace.

The fellowship of the spirit

the love of God

the grace of Jesus.

3. Who is God for you?

Trinity is different ways God manifests himself.

I gave you some ideas.

Take a moment now and think about god.

How did God manifest himself in your experience?

A word, emotion, situation.

Can you name God – give an attribute?

Oh siblings, rejoice!

Because God has moved through your lives.

Now what kind of manifestation do you long for?

Hold that - Longing for God.

4. God in Malawi

Let me tell you about one rainy day last year in Malawi.

I was working in my church office

when I realized that the rains got really heavy

and people started leaving the other building to go downwards.

Downhill on the church campus there are the houses

of some of the church employees.

And so I grab my rain jacket to see what is going on.

It's a rather big campus so I have to walk a bit.

While walking, I see boxes and sofas packed under a shelter.

When I arrive, I see people loading all kinds of things onto trucks.

Emptying the houses.

A year before in the rainy season

there was a day when the rains were so heavy

that the small stream of water was overflowing.

The water came fast and entered the houses.

Waist-deep.

This time the water was rising again
and a few meters away from the doors.

Chikondi's wife Esnat was not packing.
She sat on a rock and held her bracelet.
I realized that she was praying.

Praying against the rain.

Praying to God to protect her and her family.

Her house and belongings.

This time the water stopped just in front of the small porch.

So last year – the house was spared.

In Malawi, many people have not been so lucky.

My congregation was not heavily affected.

But I know that for them, God is the big hand that covers them.

God is able to control the elements.

And Jesus is the reason why most of them
don't worry about the spirits of the ancestors
and the need to calm and satisfy them.

Esnat experienced a miracle.

She trusts in God!

5. God in my mother

When my grandfather returned from the war, he had changed.

He was a rigorous man.

His experiences had made him harsh.

My grandmother and my mother adapted to a hard life.

They had to work and perform and not ask or think or ... live.

My grandmother died after four years of being nursed by my mum.

My mother was for herself but not allowed to be herself.

For my mum the only way to be herself was in her dreams.

There she would be experience adventures on horseback.

And then she met a preacher. A missionary.
He told her about Jesus.
About prayer and freedom from all chains that bind her.
It was this message that changed her life.
She was praying to be comforted
when – like so often – she felt like crying.
And she gained self-confidence to start saying “No” to her father.
Standing up for herself as a person with dignity.

To my mother, God is freedom.
Jesus is the hero, fighting all enemies – within and outside us.
The past can no longer hold us.
No evil force can.
There is no power greater than his power!

6. My God

I grew up with faith in God.
He was always there for me.
The truth.
And he was the true judge.
There was always this important question:
What would Jesus do?
I said: I want to follow him. I want to live his way.
But I constantly realized that I fail.
My experience was quite depressing:
I don't have the discipline.
I have a weak character.
I am not working hard enough.
I am a sinner and I have to do much more
and change
and get better

and improve
and pray
and confess
and try harder and
I am still not patient enough to just love my children all the time.
What should I do?

Then I had this experience
where my inner life was shown to me like in a theatre.
I was in the court room.
And the accuser read through the list of wrongdoings.
And I just stuttered... well. Ok. Yeah. True. But. Hmm.
Ok. Shouldn't have done this, that, everything.
So the judge had to condemn me.

There was something missing.
You probably guessed it.
The defense counsel.
My lawyer.
And when I slowly learned to include this most important part
into my inner court room,
my life changed.

Someone once told me:
God has to be at least as nice as Jesus.
And this God – this friendly God of love,
who experienced sadness and agony,
who is a tender friend of the lost,
was a new discovery – after growing up a Christian.
And I am still working on spelling it out.
G. R. A. C. E.
Grace!

7. Paul ends with God above and through the trouble

Paul writes to the congregation in Corinth.

Some people call it a sad letter of grievances.

But Paul ends on a very friendly note.

Greetings and good wishes.

He mentions one of the first hints of the trinity
in the history of our faith.

What a finish.

Closing words to remember.

Above all our differences,
our envy and loathing,
above the problems we create,
above the problems others create,
above all nonsense and rubbish
we experience ourselves or hand to others
above all suffering
even that what the church produces
is something different:

The God of miracles.

The God of freedom.

The God of grace.

And the God, who is so much more.

The God of our experience.

and the God of our longing.

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