

Lecture Notes on “The Shape of Love, John 17”  
Given at GCI Conference, July 22, 2010

I. Introduction

-Opening comments—thank-you, wonderful privilege to be here

-As Christians, we know we’re supposed to be loving

John 13:35 Jesus says that people will know we are His disciples if we have love for one another. And when Jesus was asked what the greatest commandment was, Jesus replied with two, both about love—loving God and loving neighbor as self.

Clearly, being loving is a central tenet of our faith.

-However, seems there is a lot of confusion about what love is. What does it mean to be loving? What is love: self-sacrifice? Empathy? Service? Always being nice?

-This confusion stems from unexamined assumptions we may have, that we use to evaluate ourselves, others, even God. When we decide we or others or God are not being loving, what criteria are we using? Have you every been accused of not being loving and wondered if that person was right?

-This confusion can lead to abuse in the name of love, even in the church—either our abusing others or allowing others to abuse us.

-As Christians, we need to look away from ourselves and allow God to tell us what love actually is. The only way to understand love, as with everything else, is in light of who God is, for we are certainly not the measure of love, even at our best!

-This morning, want to explore more deeply the nature of love as we find it in the triune God.

II. The first point I want to make is—love **is** the ongoing reality of the triune God.

To begin to understand who God is—we look at His **self**-revelation in Jesus.

-Jesus, as the Word, the only-begotten Son, makes God known to us and, as you know, He reveals God to be, in Himself a trinity of persons.

-When Jesus had finished His earthly ministry, when He had been crucified, resurrected and was preparing to return to His Father, He commissioned His disciples to go out into the world, preaching the gospel. He instructed them that when they baptized

converts, they were to do so, as it is recorded at the end of Matthew's gospel—in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit (28:19). Notice it is one name—singular.

In the Old Testament, a name denoted the person and connected to the actual essence of the one named. God revealed His name to Moses (Ex. 3:14) “I am that I am”

Now as Jesus gives them the personal name—Father, Son, Spirit—Jesus is telling them, now you know, **this** is who God is

-Now, what does this mean? How are we to understand God as Trinity? Fortunately, I know that you have had excellent teaching on this over the past several years, so this is probably review.

Today, in the Christian church as a whole, it seems that it is a doctrine we all know is central to the Christian faith, but is often undeveloped or ignored. It ends up being something we are supposed to assent to, but we don't have any real grasp of the meaning or implications of this fact in our daily lives.

As a young Christian, I had little teaching on the Trinity. I remember only one Sunday school class that was devoted to teaching on this subject. The teacher spoke of the Trinity like water, steam, and ice—an image that is hard to feel any personal connection to.

More often over the years, I heard the Trinity described in terms of roles or tasks: Father—Creator, Son—Redeemer, and Spirit—Sanctifier. I think this is even more prevalent today because of growing reluctance to use title “Father” or any gender language in some parts of the church

-So we end up thinking of God essentially in terms of what He does and the Trinity as primarily a business arrangement or division of labor. Also tempts us to think of only One at work at a time or that each works separately on their distinct “projects”.

-But when we look carefully at God's self-revelation in Christ, we can see that the heart, the essence or core of God's Triune being is loving, holy relationship—not the action, roles, or jobs of the triune persons

-This is why John writes in his first epistle (4:8) “God is love”

John, and the other New Testament writers, wanted to make sure that their readers understood that here, in God's triune being, is the source of all love, is what love really is. God loves us because He is love *in Himself*. Love is not just one of the things God does. Actually, **all** that God does is an expression of *Who He is* as the triune God of love.

The New Testament writers didn't want their readers to read into the word "love" notions that they already held. They needed to be careful what word they used from the Greek for the love of God.

Actually this had been an issue for those Jewish scholars who translated the Hebrew Bible into Greek about 200 years before Christ. What word should they use for God's love and for our love of God?

-The Greeks, as you probably know, had 3 main words for love: **Eros**—which was passionate love and indiscriminating, **Philia**—love of humanity or friendship love, also more general and inclusive, and **Agape**—which wasn't used nearly as much, but did mean 1) to prefer or select one over another and 2) a giving, active love on that other's behalf. When the Old Testament was translated into the Greek, known as the Septuagint, this is the word used to express God's love and for our love for God because it expresses thoughts of deliberate selection, and faithfulness.

-New Testament writers fill out agape even more. In Gospel of John, there is an emphasis on the Father's agape for the Son and the Son's agape for His followers.

-The main point I want to make here is that *Love is an ongoing, eternal reality*. It has always been and continues to actively go on, before we ever even started to love. It is not an ideal that we must strive for or a potential that we must realize in order for it to exist.

The triune love is the eternal source of life and in the end we will find there is no other love that exists apart from this love. George MacDonald, Scottish pastor of the 19<sup>th</sup> century says in his sermon entitled "The Creation in Christ"—"It is not the fact that God is all in all that unites the universe: it is the love of the Son to the Father." In other words, the unity of all things is the product of the active love in God between Father, Son, and Spirit.

-It is out of the fullness of this loving triune relationship that we are created, and living in this love is our very purpose—what we are created for.

-As we trust Him and His work in us, our capacity to truly love and be loved grows. It is not something we try to emulate or reproduce, but what we are swept up into by grace. Eternal life is to be brought up into the life of eternal loving that the triune God is—not just living forever!

III. Love, then, has a particular shape—the shape of the triune relationship

-For a long time, when I thought of God as love—I thought only of His loving us, or loving me, and this led me often to think out of my own assumptions about love. This is how we get confused—we start with ourselves and see how God compares to **our** definitions.

-Often thought of love as “putting up with”. So, God loved me because He put up with me.

I believed God loved me unconditionally...but I wanted to make sure He continued to feel okay about that, so tried hard to obey Him. I really didn't want Him to feel he got a bad deal in the end.

-So, we can't understand love, and God's love for us, by starting there. We must start where love eternally **is**—in the triune life. For the rest of our time this morning, we'll be looking at Gospel of John, especially John 17, to gain clearer picture of shape of the triune relationship and so better grasp what love is, or rather Who Love is!

John 17 is often called Jesus' high priestly prayer. Jesus has had His last supper with the disciples and has given them His last words of teaching. Now, before He goes to the cross, He prays to His Father—for His disciples and for those who will believe through their word.

This prayer of Jesus to His Father is a wonderful look into the relationship between the Father and the Son. But the chapter is best understood in the context of the whole gospel, so we will draw on other passages from John as well. I am not trying to give a systematic or historic look at the theology of love in the trinity, but to focus on one

book of New Testament, and especially one chapter to see what we can learn about the heart of the triune God.

I am also aware that I am focusing only on the Father and Son and will not be saying much about the Holy Spirit. I will just say for now that the best way to think of the Spirit is that the relationship of the Father and the Son occurs in the Spirit.

I will consider 4 interrelated aspects: knowing and being known, giving and receiving, reciprocal glorifying, and dynamic unity

#### A. Knowing and Being Known

-In John's gospel, there is an emphasis on an exclusive relationship of seeing and knowing between the Father and the Son.

At the end of Prologue, in 1:18, author says "No one has ever seen God; the only Son, He who is in the bosom of the Father, he has made Him known."

In John 6:46, Jesus, in speaking to the Jews, says "Not that any one has seen the Father except him who is from God; he has seen the Father."

Again in 7:29—"I know him, for I come from him, and he sent me."

-In the triune relationship loving and knowing are not opposed to each other, but in the world's thinking, they often are separate or work against each other. To understand this better, let's consider how we tend to think of love and knowing in our secular culture.

The English playwright, William Shakespeare often spoke in his plays of love "being blind". Far from knowing and loving going together, here love has nothing to do with knowledge whatsoever.

And this view is still prevalent today. Movies often depict people "falling in love" before they really know **anything** about the other person besides their outward appearance. We think of love as being accidental, something happens to us, beyond our control or influence

-With this view of love, as being disconnected to knowledge, either more knowledge leads to a lessening of love—so the *more* you know, the *less* you love

Or you remain blind to who the person you claim to love **really** is—the "one" you love is really more an image of someone in your mind that you project onto

the other (ex. Giving Gary flowers when first married because wanted to believe his way of expressing love would be the same as mine)

-In the real love that eternally exists, the love out of which we are made and are being made more and more able to participate in—there is absolutely **no** opposition between love and knowledge. The relationship between Father and Son is *particular* and love is shaped by, and fed by the actual knowing of the other, in particular—Father knows Son as Son, Son knows Father as Father.

-When we divorce love and knowledge—we can also think that love primarily as just an act of will, because knowledge of the other doesn't feed love. Or may think that love is generic, general—one size fits all. I think this is what can happen when we focus almost solely on “principles”—actions and behaviors to help us be loving in our relationships. These “how-tos” can include: how to build a better marriage, understand your spouse, have a vital church, raise godly children

These principles may be helpful, but not when we mistake them for reality. And often we find we can't **just apply** these principles to our relationships. Actually there are **no** generic spouses, **no** generic children, and **no** generic churches.

-But the love God has come to share with us includes true, **particular** knowing and being known. Jesus said that the first part of greatest commandment—to love God with whole being—including our minds! But this command not an appeal to exercising sheer will. In John's Gospel, Jesus makes it clear that it is the One who knows the Father has come to make Him known

In Jesus' prayer in John 17, He describes the eternal life that He has come to give: “that they may **know** you, the only true God and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.”

-This is truly amazing—the eternal Triune God, out of His loving fullness, in Jesus has come into time and space, into our fallen humanity to *give us access and bring us into that closed circle of knowing and loving.*

-End of John 17: “ I made **known** to them your name, and I will make it **known** that the love with which you have loved me may be in them” -So agape love includes

knowing and being known. What does Jesus mean here about making the Father's name known? And what is the connection to love?

Actually "name" has come up 3 other times in this chapter:

v. 6: made known your **name** to those you gave me

v. 11 prays Father will protect them in His **name**

v. 12 says He protected them in the Father's **name** while He was with them

Remember, the name is the essence of the person. What Jesus means here, then, is that He has revealed the very Father-heart of God. We know God's fatherhood because we know Him as Father *of the Son*, not first Father of us. *Jesus extends this name to us.*

To know is to love and to love is to move towards greater knowing—which leads to greater loving. Paul, in his first letter to the Corinthians, at the end of his words on love in chapter 13, "Now I know in part, then *I fully know, even as I am fully known.*"

## B. Giving and Receiving

-The 2<sup>nd</sup> aspect want to focus on—In the love between the Father, Son, and Spirit, there is *real* giving and receiving

Knowing is not passive, but involves active exchange. We can see this throughout the Gospel of John and especially in John 17.

Look through the chapter. See verb "give," repeated many times. For now, we want to focus on descriptions of giving that involve Father and Son relationship

Father gives Son: authority/power, people, work, word/words, Father's name, glory, love

-Notice that giving seems to be exclusively from Father to Son, except in matter of glory. The Son's initial request is that Father would glorify Son so Son could glorify Him—but will talk more on the giving and receiving of glory little later.

-This emphasis on the Father giving to the Son—is a theme throughout John's gospel:

5:22 "The Father judges no one, but has given all judgment to the Son

5:26 "For as the Father has life in himself, he has granted the Son also to have life in himself"

5:36 Jesus says the works the Father has granted him to accomplish bear  
Him witness

6:37 all the people Father is giving will come

7:16 and 8:28 His teaching not His own, but Father's who sent Him

It is also clear that this giving of the Father to the Son is out of the Father's **love** for the Son. In 5:34-35, author states that the Father doesn't give the Son the Spirit by measure, that is in part, but v.35 "the Father **loves** the Son, and has given **all** things into his hand."

-Why does Jesus emphasize this giving of Father to Him? Is it only to establish His authority? And if so, why connect giving with loving?

-Besides, isn't most important thing to know about Jesus—what He does in saving us from our sins and what He tells us to do? That's what I used to think

But I came to see that Jesus came to make known His wonderful, giving Father and Himself as the glorious beloved Son. In fact, we don't fully grasp what Jesus *does for us on cross* if don't see that His intention in saving us **from** our sins is to save us **for** participating in **this** very relationship—for this is life, Zoë life. It is glorious life, and it is glorious because this giving and receiving within the trinity is a **real** exchange.

Each gives as the particular person He is—Father, Son, and Spirit. Father, Son, and Spirit are not *interchangeable parts*.

They actually receive from one another what they cannot give themselves. The Son receives from Father what He cannot give Himself because Father gives **as** the Father. Father receives from Son what He cannot give Himself because Son gives **as** the Son. (Same with Holy Spirit)

Agape, then, is *a giving of one's self* to the beloved and *a true receiving of the Beloved*. The Father gives Himself to **be** the Father of the Son, the Son gives Himself to **be** the Son of the Father and the Spirit gives Himself to **be** the Spirit of Father and Son. **Nothing** held back.



-This helps us understand why most of the giving statements are from the Father to the Son. *This is how the Father gives, as the Father of the Son, to His Beloved Son.*

*Jesus gives as the Son*—so, receives from the Father and participates in His Father’s work and with the Father, brings to completion God’s work.

John 4—after the Samaritan woman has hurried back to her village to tell them about Jesus, Jesus has a conversation with His disciples, who have brought food for them all to eat. When the disciples encourage Him to eat, Jesus says He has food they don’t know about. They worry He has been getting food from somewhere else. So Jesus clarifies, “My food is to do the will of him who sent me, and to accomplish his work” (4:34) word “accomplish” is Greek *telos*. It means, not primarily to end, but to bring to completion, fulfillment

-This how Jesus gives to the Father as the Son

-Now, to modern ears Jesus’ statements about receiving from the Father and doing the Father’s will—could look like an unhealthy relationship. Don’t we think of maturity as self-sufficiency? If we receive from another what we can’t give ourselves, aren’t we really just showing that we are needy? We may be tempted to say to Jesus—“okay, enough with the dependence of the Father—get out there and get your own life!”

-And, going back to knowing—we often think we **really** know ourselves *only apart from all relationship*—that’s when we see **real** us. So being self-sufficient is being fully ourselves.

-We are tempted to believe that the goal is to be able to give ourselves everything we need so that we can give out of our own self-sufficiency. And we often want to receive from others what **could’ve** given ourselves—to give and show that we don’t really **need** to receive

Our fallen nature has really twisted our understanding of the giving and receiving that love involves. Agape love, real love, as we learn in triune relationship, is **freely** giving and receiving of one’s self.

But we often think of this exchange of giving and receiving as a binding contract—we want to keep things even. We often give *in order* to receive. In this case, no

real and giving and receiving of the self is happening because we are trying to stay in control.

In the triune love, giving and receiving *not contractual*—Jesus doesn't force or manipulate His Father to give to Him by first giving of Himself. *It is full and free*. And there is no competition here—no envy and jealousy. The Son is **happy** to give as the Son; He is not stingy in His giving.

He is not put out at having to be the Son

He is not hoping to someday be the Father or to stop receiving from the Father

-This is agape love, and this is what Jesus came to draw us up into and give us a share in.

Looking back at John 17, we can see other place the word “give” is repeated—the Son giving to us. He gives us: v. 2 eternal life (Zoë, God-life), v.6 shares Father's name with us by making it known, v. 8 gives words the Father gave to Him, v.14 has given the Father's word, v.22 gives glory the Father has given Him. And Jesus has protected them, guarded them (v.12), sanctified Himself for them so that they may have share in the love with which Father has loved the Son (v.26)

-This *free and reciprocal giving*—giving and receiving that is *particularly shaped* by each person—is part of the love that God is and that He is growing us up into. Our fallen love is being sanctified so that we can have true giving and receiving with God and with each other—fully and freely without strings attached!

-We are fallen in both giving and in receiving. In **giving**, we struggle with really giving ourselves—it is very vulnerable and we are afraid of rejection, of being weighed and found wanting. We compare ourselves to others and we try to compete in our giving. We may always feel—what we have to give not enough, not that great because not equivalent to the others around us.

-And we struggle with freely **receiving** from others and even from, or perhaps especially from, God. God's triune love comes towards us as grace and we can really balk at receiving it. Karl Barth defines sin in fact as refusing to accept God's grace.

We may try to justify why we **should** receive or try to buy the gift in a contractual way or pay it back. Or we may try to get others, including God to do or to give *what we want*, more than *actually receive what they have to give*. (ex.—my trying to make God give me the chance to move closer to home by being miserable, rather than receiving His joy where He had me actually living) This difficulty in freely receiving connects to our being unable or maybe even unwilling to see and know others truly.

-John, in 13<sup>th</sup> chapter—records Jesus washing disciples' feet before the Passover supper and tells us of interaction between Peter and Jesus when Jesus gets ready to wash his feet.

Washing feet—was considered a despicable job. Disciples were expected to do many things for their teachers, but they were never expected to wash the teacher's feet. This task was only for slaves. Jesus is revealing here more of His full giving of Himself to us, giving that culminates on cross.

Peter first attempts to reject Jesus washing his feet, saying “you shall never wash my feet!” But Jesus tells Him that if he doesn't receive this, Peter has no part in Jesus. Then Peter wants to have Jesus wash all of him. He is willing to receive, but *he wants it to be on his terms*. Peter is still trying to manage the interaction.

-But Jesus is committed to giving Peter *what He has* and to having Peter *receive exactly that*—no more, no less. I believe this is what John means when he says at beginning of this section: “loving his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end (telos again—so He loved them to the fullest extent, completely)”

-Back to John 17—notice the words used to describe the actions of disciples—received, believed, kept, know. This is what the disciples did in response to the self-giving of Jesus—they received!

We enter into God's grace by **receiving** what He is giving and by this grace He gives, that He grows us up to fully participate in this free giving and receiving on one's self.

C. This leads to my next point—the 3<sup>rd</sup> aspect of the triune relationship I want to talk about is Reciprocal Glorifying

Looking again at Jesus' prayer in John 17—we see that Jesus' 1<sup>st</sup> request of His Father is “glorify your Son so that the Son may glorify you”

-Son and Father give each other glory and receive glory from one another. This glory and love are the only 2 things Jesus speaks of in entirely mutual terms. In other words, the Father gives the Son authority, but it doesn't say that the Son gives the Father authority. But does say the Father and the Son give each other glory and love.

-Why is that? Well, let's start by considering what is the Biblical understanding of glory and glorifying. The scholars who translated the Hebrew Scriptures into Greek, used this Greek word primarily to refer to the radiance of God's being. To glorify God, they believed, was no other than to affirm His nature. It is the natural, right response to the glory they beheld in God. So, we see that *glorifying is connected to and shaped by the Object.*

Now, one more interesting point in the Old Testament understanding of glory is that when one affirms the divine glory, he/she actually shares in it. When Moses beholds the glory of God, he returns to camp with a shining face.

In the New Testament, the word expresses the divine mode of being—God **is** glorious, and, as in the Old Testament, glorifying is affirming this and so sharing in the glory.

In 17:4, John tells the Father “I glorified you on earth by finishing (telos again) the work you gave me to do”

-Jesus glorifies and so participates in Father's glory by being the Son that He is. He shows forth the truly wonderful nature of the Father **by receiving** from the Father **as** the Son, and by participating in the Father's work **as** the Son. *So* He has made known the Father's name to those the Father gives Him, He has protected them and guarded them in the name the Father has given Him, He has spoken to them what He hears from the Father and does what He sees the Father doing. *And it is in this being the Son that He is,*

loving the Father and knowing the Father and giving Himself to the Father as the Son, *that He shows forth the glory of the Father.*

In other words, as He loves, knows and gives to the Father as the Son, He is saying, “See how great, how wonderful my Father is? This is why He is called Father—because that is who He is and I show you His Father heart as I live out my relationship with Him before you.”

-And the Father, *in being the Father of the Son and in giving to the Son as the Father, glorifies the Son*—shows us the Son’s wonderful heart.

-Son, Father, and Spirit don’t glorify themselves. This is because the *Father isn’t Father by Himself and Son and Spirit aren’t themselves by themselves*. Jesus **is** the Son of the Father—He is Who He is in relationship and we only know Him in His relationship with the Father and the Spirit. He has no being apart from the Father and the Spirit. This what Tom and James Torrance mean when speaks of being-in-relationship. They are themselves *only in the relationship with each other*.

We often struggle with understanding glory and glorifying because we abstract it from relationship.

For us, glorifying God is worship. And if we have misconceptions of worship, we will be tempted to read them into this reciprocal glorifying of the triune life. We may think of worship as something we are commanded to do. We tell God how great He is because He tells us to—so He somehow needs it and we somehow need it. So glorifying that goes on in God—just Jesus telling His Father how great He is and visa versa? (“you’re great”... “no, you’re great”)

But real glorifying and worship possible when know, understand, take in and enjoy and so participate in the greatness of the One we behold—it is a response. Like a sunset—we “glorify” or praise a sunset by actually beholding it—by enjoying it and so, participating in it.

And we, like Jesus the Son, truly glorify God when we live as the children we actually are in Him—when we live out of receiving His love, and trusting in His real presence and work in *our particular lives*. Because in doing this, we show forth the true glory of the triune God.

And as Father shows forth glory of Son and Son shows forth glory of Father (and same for Spirit) there is real joy, life, peace. **This** is why Jesus tells disciples in 14:27—“Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you” and in John 17:13—“But now I am coming to you, and I speak these things in the world so that they may have my joy made complete (telos) in themselves” Peace and joy are the fruit of agape love. God **enjoys** being God. Father, Son, and Spirit truly delight in one another.

We see no opposition, no tension, no needing to grab for oneself in this reciprocal glorifying within the Trinity.

-And the relationship Jesus reveals to us is the relationship that God **is**—it isn’t just how He *appears to us*. John 17:5—after Jesus states He has glorified the Father on earth, requests “So now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory *that I had in your presence before the world existed.*”

-v. 24 “Father, I desire that those also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory which you have given me *because you loved me before the foundation of the world.*”

This glorious, wonderful relationship, is who God **is** from all eternity. And this is what Jesus has come to give us a share in, with its attendant delight and joy.

D. This leads to last point—which is closely connected with the previous 3—Dynamic Unity of Love

This giving, receiving, knowing, loving and glorifying is *always going on*. That is what relationship turns out to be. It is not that they have a relationship that they occasionally act on. The relationship **is** a relationship because the relating is *continually going on*. They have their being *by actually being in relationship*—by acting in and through this relationship.

This has been hard for me to grasp. There is no one I am constantly relating to. When I say I’m in relationship with my husband, I am not thinking only of the moments

when we are actually relating. I guess I think of it as a passive connection, which at times becomes active.

But when I look at the relationship that is God, I see this isn't so. This helps us understand statements Jesus makes where He uses the present tense.

Jesus states more than once that Father *is with Him now*:

8:9 He who sent me **is** with me, he has not left me alone

16:32 After Jesus lets disciples know they will scatter and leave Him alone, “yet I am not alone, for the Father **is** with me.”

1:18 **is** in bosom of Father

15:10 says he **abides** in Father's love

The statements of being in the Father and the Father in Him—are in present tense—like 10:38: “that you may know and understand that the Father **is** in me and I **am** in the Father.”

But they are not just together all the time, but they are actually giving and receiving all time, loving all time, **this** is why He is not alone. The Triune God is a togetherness—a fellowship, a communion.

5:19 “Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing from himself, *but only what he sees the Father doing*, for whatever he does, that the Son does likewise. For the Father *loves the Son, and shows him all he is doing*.”

5:30 says He judges *only as He hears from the Father*.

-So as Jesus teaches, rebukes, heals on earth—He is, moment-by-moment, living in, and keying off of, His loving relationship with Father. They are always moving towards one another in love.

We often think of love as static—not dynamic. I often think of being loved by someone else as something I remember most of the time, not something I am actually experiencing all the time. Jesus didn't have to remember that His Father loved Him while He was on earth, He didn't keep a note in His robe from the Father to remind Him.

-This is why Jesus knows who He is, this is why He is so secure. He moves, He acts—out of continually receiving from Father and continually glorifying Father by being

the Son, continually enjoying the Father and the joy, peace, and love of relationship is actually always being experienced, lived in by Him.

-The triune God is **full**, not empty—Jesus *always knows Himself as the beloved Son*—He lives in the love, the glory of the Father—He doesn't have to earn it—always already has it and delights to glorify this Father who is actually *always being His Father*.

-All God does towards us—is the whole God acting in perfect co-ordination and cooperation. St. Augustine once said that “All the acts of God are indivisible”

-The triune God is always at work—and is unified as each contributes as the Father, Son, and Spirit to their joint action.

-Creation is a triune act—Father creates in, through and for the Son, in the Spirit  
Redemption is a triune act—Jesus' whole life on earth was lived within the Triune relationship. When Jesus states that He **only** does what sees Father doing—*what does this mean when He is on the cross?*

-God's intention in creating us has always been to *extend His love, joy, triune life out and to draw us up into Himself, to give us share in this Zoë life—this ongoing, holy loving relationship*. He comes to enable us to participate in His **righteousness**—His **right relationship**. The triune God extends Himself to us through Christ in the Spirit.

-In John 17, notice that Jesus begins His prayer to Father—“the hour has come” It has been observed at various points through the gospel that it was not his hour yet.

But now it is. I used to assume that Jesus is referring primarily to the crucifixion when He speaks of His hour. If we look at chapters 14-17—which all takes place after supper and before cross, Jesus says His hour is coming and now is—for Him to go to or return to the Father.

17:11 I am coming to you Holy Father

17:13 Now I am coming to you



-This is what He came to do—not just to die for our sins, not just to conquer death—but to bring us up to be with Him. In John 14:2, Jesus tells disciples He goes to prepare a place for them in His Father’s house, and that He will come again and take them to Himself—“that where I am you may **be** also”

-In Jesus, love reaches out to us in grace. The eternal triune God breaks into time and space and in the incarnation of Son, grabs a hold of our fallen humanity, our broken, twisted relationships. He overcomes and destroys our sin to sweep us up into the Father’s heart.

Jesus shares us a share in His **own** Sonship—not a relationship **like** His, but an actual share **in** His.

17:3 gives us a share *in his eternal life*, so we know Father and Son;

v. 11 gives us a share *in His oneness*—that they may be one even as we are one;

v.13 they may have *my joy* fulfilled in themselves;

v. 21 that they may all be one “*even as you Father are in me, and I in you that they may be in us*”;

v. 23 “I in them and you in me—that they may become perfectly one”;

v.26 “I have made known to them *your name*, and I will make it known, that the *love with which you love me may be in them and I in them.*”

As our relationship with Jesus is part of the triune relationship—it is ongoing, present, always active and dynamic—He will **continue** to make His Father’s name known. And since we have share in His son-relationship with His Father—as children born of God, it makes sense that the resurrected Jesus announces to Mary “I am returning *to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God*” (20:17)

-He has made room in Himself for us and room in us for Himself.

Jesus doesn’t just give an example of a good, loving relationship to follow. This really hit home for me when we were living in Scotland and Gary was getting his PhD. I was at a friend’s house visiting, when I had sort of a vision or an image come to mind. I pictured myself outside of a home, looking in through the window. And inside, I could see the Father, Son, and Spirit enjoying the wonderful relationship they have. It was just

the kind of relationship I knew I longed for—to belong, to fully be at home and fully and freely giving and receiving love. I wished that I could have the same kind of relationship with the Father that Jesus had, but knew how inadequate I was to make that happen.

And as I stood there peering in, I saw Jesus get up and come out. He came around to me and brought me in, and sat me on the Father's lap. And, all of a sudden, I understood. God was bringing me *right into that triune relationship*. I **did** have a relationship like Jesus, *because He had given me a share in His relationship!* I was so excited that I jumped up, hastily excused myself and ran home to share this with Gary.

-We are being drawn into the relationship of the Father and the Son in the Spirit and our sanctification, our perfection *is God making us more and more able to fully participate in this love*, the love that is reality and has a particular source—the triune God and has a particular shape—truly knowing and being known (in particular, not general), freely giving of one's self and receiving of other, reciprocal glorying—being able to enjoy and participate in the true good character of the other, and dynamic unity.

What are we to do? Believe, or trust, count on the living presence and activity of the triune God in our lives, receive Him, John 15—abide in Him. We often assume this is just the first step—but after that we just need to get going on the doing. But the **life** of a Christian is fundamentally abiding in the triune God. (Well try to explore some of the implications of this in seminar tomorrow morning.)