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Zion Lutheran Church, Lewistown, MT
Holy Trinity

Genesis 1:1-2:4a; Matthew 28:16-20

Let us pray. Grant us, O God, to hear your voice, and in hearing your voice to love your word, and in loving your word to do your will, through Christ our Lord and by the power of your Spirit. Amen

Today I participated in an online class to help church leaders put to use some of the digital tools we now have for doing ministry. One of the speakers said that during this season of Covid-19 there has been a spike in Google searches with questions like “Who is Jesus?” and “What is the Bible all about?” In times of struggle, people naturally turn to God even if they don’t know who God is or how to connect with God.

In the past week, racial tension and conflict has escalated around the country with several recent deaths of African Americans that made the news headlines, including that of George Floyd. People are now also looking to those of us who claim Jesus Christ as God and for whom the Bible is the very Word of God, to show them who God is.

The festival of the Holy Trinity is a day on the church calendar when we celebrate and wonder in the fullness of God’s power and presence in and among all of Creation!

Matthew is the only gospel in which Jesus names Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in the same sentence. These are the names that Christianity has assigned to the “3 persons” of the one God in all of our teachings and rites to express the complexity of God down through the centuries.

But sometimes I wonder if these 3 names still put God in a box. They make God “manageable” for us. I can imagine God as a Father who loves and provides for his children. The stories of Jesus, the Son of God, help me to know God as a friend, who “walks with me and talks with me.”

And the Holy Spirit is that mysterious part of God who is the essence of inspiration for poets and musicians and artists.

So, if we are going to ask questions about God and the nature of God, we will also wonder about what that means for us, especially those of us who, through Holy Baptism, claim a relationship with God.

Let’s see how this first account of the creation of the world teaches us about the complex nature of God in whose image we are made.

“In the beginning when God created...” our first lesson about God’s nature is that God is beyond the confines of time. In the beginning of time as we know it, God already was. Our lives are so wrapped up in before, during, and after—timelines that begin with a birth or an event and carry on with the choices and consequences that follow.

God is both beyond time, and in the midst of time. God created the sun and moon and stars for “seasons and days and years.” God has given us the gift of time, to bring order to our lives.

This Creation account also shows us how God loves partnerships! When God created light and separated it from the darkness, God did not eliminate the darkness. Just as the light and dark stay in relationship with one another, all the rest of creation does, too.

The sky and the earth, the waters and the land, the great varieties of birds and animals and sea creatures all were created to share space and live together in and on those spaces. God provided plants and trees for the animals to eat, so even the flora and the fauna were created for one another.

The fullness of God is seen in the relationships of the natural world. And this includes us, humankind, as our translation calls us. Humanity was created to live in relationship with the rest of the created world. Eugene Peterson's paraphrase, "The Message" says it this way:

God spoke: "Let us make human beings in our image,
make them reflecting our nature
So they can be responsible for the fish in the sea,
the birds in the air, the cattle,
And, yes, Earth itself,
and every animal that moves on the face of Earth."

The nature of God is based on teamwork and shared responsibility. Not only are we given the task to care for God's good creation, God created us and all living things to be a part of God's ongoing work to bring forth life. All of creation—the light and the dark, the land and the water, the plants and the animals, and all of humanity—were created as co-creators with God.

Notice, too, that in this telling of the Creation story, that humankind is a broader term than just two individual people. If God created so many varieties of birds and fish, cattle and wild animals, surely this story can help us see the variety within the human being, too. Male and female are needed to "be fruitful and multiply" just as the plants and animals do.

But in light of this week's news, I am also imagining God creating human beings of every skin color, hair color, height and build, gifting each one uniquely to share in God's creative and creating activity wherever we live on this amazing planet.

And we know from the rest of God's story—from the next story of Creation with Adam and Eve, to the Flood, to Abraham and Sarah, and their descendants as many as the stars in the sky—that humanity fails to live up to all that God calls us to do and to be. We fall short as care-givers and life-bearers.

So, God came into the world, to limit God's self to time and space, in order to save us from ourselves and our tendency to think we are more important than we really are. God entered into the places where the good Creation became broken and hurtful and took all that onto himself in the life and person of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

Jesus entered into human relationships and raised up believers to guide and renew the world into life-giving community with God and with one another. And by his death and

resurrection, Christ made a way for humanity to once again reflect God's nature of generosity and community and grace with the whole world as God created us to do.

The Spirit of God, who swept over the face of the waters, continues to sweep over Creation to bring new life and the hope of God's goodness given and promised since the beginning of time.

On this Holy Trinity Sunday, as we explore and wonder in the fullness of God, our God who creates and gives order, our God who shares and engages with the world, our God who fills and renews and inspires, we rejoice and give thanks for ALL of who God is.

May we follow Christ's command to extend God's community to ALL people, of all nations. Let us remember that each and every person has been created by God and in the image of God, and that we are responsible to care for one another and the whole of creation. We do that by trusting in the power and presence of God—Creator and Father, Savior and Son, and the Spirit and Breath of God—who is with us to the end of the age.

Thanks be to God! Amen

Prayers of Intercession

Called into unity with one another and the whole creation, let us pray for our shared world.

A brief silence.

God of community, you form us as your church. Guide our bishops, pastors, and deacons as they lead the church in these trying times. With all the baptized, may they be strengthened to share the good news of Jesus Christ, and in prayer and action, strive for peace and justice in all the earth. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

God of creation, you called everything into being. Sustain this world with your renewing care. Instill in us a deeper wonder for the created world you've called good, and a greater humility for our place within it. Kindle in us a creative and resilient spirit as we care for the earth and its creatures. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

God of counsel, all authority belongs to you. Encourage leaders to seek wisdom and respond with courage and compassion to those most in need. We pray for community leaders in this time of unrest. Further the work of advocates who pursue justice in often ignored communities. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

God of care, you created us in your image; we are your beloved children. May we recognize your likeness in one another. We pray for all mourning the death of your beloved child, George Floyd. Hold in your loving embrace all experiencing trauma, fear, uncertainty, and loss (*especially*). Protect vulnerable children and adults from violence or neglect; provide what is needed for those lacking access to food, shelter, and other services. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

God of healing, you accompany us in sickness and suffering. Bring relief to all afflicted with the coronavirus and all those isolated now more than ever, especially those in prison or care facilities. Strengthen caregivers, health workers, and all whose work ensures the safety and well-being of others. Console, heal, and nourish all in need this day, especially Jessie, Harriet, Don, and Oleta. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

God of compassion, you comfort us in our grief with the promise of the resurrection. We give you thanks for the saints of all time and in our lives. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

Receive these prayers, O God, and those too deep for words; through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.