

"Wholeness and Blessing"

Genesis 1:1-2:4a and 2 Corinthians 12:11-13
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Trinity Sunday

So, honest to God, the first thing I read in the commentary on our Genesis passage was this: "Trinity Sunday has been the bane of preachers for generations. Senior pastors regularly dump the preaching for this Sunday on their associates. All Christian clergy seemingly struggle with understanding and articulating the divine mystery of the Trinity at some point in their ministries" (*Feasting on the Word*, Year A, Vol. 3; p. 26, Pastoral Perspective).

It's not what happened here – I didn't have to arm wrestle the head of staff for this opportunity but I would have; the preaching schedule at this church is not determined by lectionary content. But, what is important is this idea of struggling to articulate divine mystery – it isn't just a pastor thing; I find most Christians come right up against the mystery of God and then treat it like a stopping point if not a wall. It is difficult find words and convey our beliefs about Spirit and Trinity, but saying the word 'mystery' can be a conversation end-ers. So, Trinity Sunday stands in opposition to letting that happen; rather than stepping back away from the wall, we are invited to take a run at it like Harry Potter trying to get to Platform 9 ¾. Or if you prefer, Joshua at Jericho.

God's story begins in the dark with a Power who has no beginning and no ending, creating a universe out of the *tohu-vabohu*, or the formless void while the wind soared above the *Tehom*/or 'the face of the Deep.' This is Creator and Spirit. The Prologue to the Gospel of John adds the incarnate presence of The Word through which God's words and power pass.

In chapter one of Genesis, the creative content of each day, be it light, land, fish, birds or animals was pronounced 'good,' and then on the sixth day, when "God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them" the Bible goes on to say, for the first time, "God blessed them, ...". From the beginning, every step of the creation was good and human beings both good and blessed. The role of blessed humanity is so important to the story and the planet, that the creation story is woven throughout the entire biblical text; it is often repeated in the Psalms, it's in Isaiah, Job, (and other OT books), the gospels, and in some of the epistles; God is the central message of the Bible.

So the challenge is to enter the mystery.

To claim the mystery of the Trinity is to claim that we are, as the second creation story tells us, made of dust. Physicists tell us the dust of the earth is actually stardust that long ago exploded into a Universe that is beyond belief in beauty, power, order, and scale. This whole story is a gift to the imagination and whatever we have conjured up can now be edited with pictures from the Hubble telescope and computer graphics depicting our growing knowledge of what is out there. But out of this comes a place where some dismiss God's mystery and power and surrender to science.

As people of faith, we are called to see God in all of it – in the whole shebang, as it were – we do not have to choose between faith and science. Through the creation story, through Jesus' ministry, and through the work of the Spirit, we are invited to see the God, who over and over again said, "Let there be...", through the sun, moon and stars or through all the beauty and the bounty of the earth.

Which can lead to another place where some abandon the journey; it is easy to leave God in God's heaven and, vow to pick up the trail when we die. Catholic sister and professor of theology, Elizabeth Johnson challenges us to get grounded in this story, she says: "If the great, unknowable mystery of God is pictured as the glowing sun, and God incarnate is a ray of that same light streaming to the earth (Christ the sunbeam), then Spirit is the point of light that actually arrives and affects the earth with warmth and energy. And it is all the one light. Again, the transcendent God is like an upwelling spring of water, and a river that flows outward from this source, and the irrigation channel where the weather meets and moistens the earth (Spirit). And it is all the one water. Yet again, the triune God is like a plant with its root, shoot, and fruit: deep, invisible root, green stem reaching into the world, and flower that opens to spread beauty and fragrance and to fructify the earth with fruit and seed (Spirit). And it is all one living plant" (*Women, Earth, and Creator Spirit*, p. 41).

Johnson hands us a way of seeing Trinity coming from the cosmos and grounded to earth in every plant and river. We believe in the Triune God as Creator and Source of the good. The text demonstrates God's will and power to save which is God the Savior and Redeemer: Jesus Christ. God saves through constant flow of love which is God the Holy Spirit and Sustainer. Because of this, everyday there is visible benediction – visible Trinitarian blessing – as told to us by Paul in the second letter to the Corinthians.

Hear God's word to you today:

"Finally Sisters and Brothers, farewell. Put things in order, listen to my appeal, agree with one another, live in peace; and the God of love and peace will be with you. Greet one another with a holy kiss. All the saints greet you. The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with all of you."

This is the word of the Lord.

There is no doubt in my mind as I see the images from the Hubble that God is real and that God is God and God is good; God has spread God's triune self into the universe and is grounded into the life of this planet which means it is not only in nature and animals around us, it is in us! Trinity, then, is a calling on our lives; belief in and acceptance of the blessings of Trinity is a mission, to receive God's blessing is a calling to pass it on. Can that be another reason we stop short of embracing the mystery? On a good day, we might be able to do some of what Jesus did, we might be able to uphold some of God's commandments, we might be able to let the Spirit whoosh us off to help a neighbor in need but to fulfill the calling of all three, to work toward God's Trinitarian justice, wisdom, equality, and economy every day is overwhelming. Trinity Sunday is the big picture view, the whole cosmos, the whole mission; it is awesome in its magnificence and its beauty and overwhelming in its mission to love.

Because if we're honest, if the planet is a visible presence of God's goodness and humanity is a visible presence of God's goodness and blessing, then the well-being of both is a witness to our commitment or lack thereof to God's ways. Again, from Johnson, "The environmental crisis is intertwined with a social system that allows a few to benefit by making a profit at the expense of the many in the form of low wages, bad working conditions, and poisonous side-effects. Prophecy knows that remedying environmental degradation involves addressing dehumanizing poverty as part of a holistic ethic based on interdependence rather than exploitation among human beings themselves and between human beings and the earth" (Johnson, p. 66).

So a word about that, humanity was blessed but is not without flaw. The New Testament understanding of 'perfect' does not mean to be without flaw (remember the creation is good, but there is a snake in the garden); to be "perfect, as your Father in heaven is perfect," as Matthew says (5:48), means 'to be whole, complete, or mature.' In a New Testament sense, 'perfect' means that body, mind and soul are connected and that the wellness of each one is dependent on the wellness of the whole. It is akin to weeding the

garden we know as the Earth and learning to turn a deaf ear to the self-serving snake that lives within each of our brain stems if not our hearts.

Trinity Sunday is a reality check. The Psalmist's says, "The earth is the Lord's and all that is in it, the world and those who live in it" (24:1); Trinity reveals to us that Native American spirituality comes closer to living this truth than does White Western capitalism. Trinity reveals that attempts to diminish the value of any person because of color, sexual orientation, religious practice or lack thereof, or economic status is idolatry of one's own race, sexual orientation, religion, or status; our warring nature is a constant denial of the goodness, abundance, and unity of the Trinity itself; and to hoard the blessings of the earth is a denial of God's sovereign love. Thus the invitation to enter the mystery.

It's my experience, that opposite to the commentary I shared at the beginning, preachers love to crawl around through a good mystery. I once read that pastors as a group like to read murder mysteries in higher percentages than the rest of the population. We love to comb through words and images looking for clues to meaning and outcomes. That's theology – this is all theology. Doing theology – knowing God - changes a person, changes our values and way of living. That's God's real invitation to you through the wholeness of creation and through your whole life.

Last week, on Pentecost Sunday, not one but two organs quit working on us. An organ needs air, on the day when the Spirit descended upon the first apostles like a violent wind, and Spirit being a word that means wind, breathe, and air, it was a mystery to me how and why our wind instruments quit. But as the service went on, I had to laugh because I realized that we were winging it! In addition to the red shoes and the red velvet sport coat, we all shared the fun of it along with the realization that something new and different was happening and it was all an unexpected gift.

If we can trust God in the small things, we are on the way to trusting the kingdom of heaven as it draws near. Because God is God, humanity is always in the midst of a mighty conversion, if only we will "Let there be" ... light, life, wisdom, truth, love and goodness within us; if only we will become conduits for God's light, life, wisdom, truth, love and goodness! If only we surrender our own will and let ourselves live into the will of God the Creator, Redeemer and Sustainer. May it be so. Amen.