

June 7, 2020

This is Trinity Sunday... Our gospel lesson is the Great Commission, only found in Matthew, Jesus' last words, "go to all nations, and baptize them in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit."

As we remember from our confirmation days, the Father creates, the Son redeems and the Holy Spirit sanctifies. In our Old Testament lesson, we have the priestly version of the creation story.

The Jewish Priests who were exiled to Babylon, undoubtedly heard their captors account of creation, which is essentially a story of one god murdering another god. And so when the Jewish theologians heard that story, they likely responded with their own version of the story...

And it's called the priestly creation story, because it fits a call and response shape. It has a liturgical form. On the first day, this happened, and God saw that it was good, and on the second day, this happened, and God saw that it was good... so on and so forth... The story fits a pattern, that was likely used in a worship setting.

The theological statement that the story emphasizes is that creation itself was not made out of violence and murder, but rather, spoken into existence out of nothing by a loving God! In other words, the origins of everything there is, of all creation is made by God and loved by God. And it is fundamentally Good! And God saw that it was Good!

Although Humanity, as we've seen this past week is in bondage to sin and death, creation itself is literally God's jewel.

Last week I mentioned that as Lutherans we tend to focus a lot of attention on Jesus, the Son. And last week I did some reflecting on the Holy Spirit. Today I'd like to spend some time reflecting on the Father, the Creator.

Franciscan Priest, Richard Rohr has said that Creation itself is God's first Scripture. I like that... Even before our scriptures were written, people looked to the natural world, to interpret things about God.

And I'll be honest, I think this is something we all resonate with on some level. There is something profoundly relational between us and the physical world we live in. Anyone who's worked the land, anyone who's watched sunsets, you know what I'm talking about...

Bunch of little stories today... When I was a kid we used to lay on our backs and look at the stars. We would wonder how many there were, how far away they were... And to think that God created every single one of them... *(Pause)*

Kris and I like to ride the motorcycle to La Crosse. Beautiful scenery along the river, perfect distance... The view on top of Grandad bluff is amazing! You can see three states... Like looking at the stars, it's a big perspective... And just think, God created it all... *(Pause)*

I remember doing a grave side committal service many years ago, and just as we said amen, several mourning doves cooed, as if on cue... The grieving widow said they were her husband's favorite birds. She smiled; she knew it was God's way of comforting her. *(Pause)*

Last September Kris and I were on an island off the Scottish coast called Iona. The island is small, and has been a destination for spiritual pilgrims for centuries. One day we hiked to a place called St Columba's bay. And the beach was amazing, rocks of every shape and color. We spent hours combing the beach and putting rocks in our pockets. Every single rock seemed especially designed by God.

And the God who created all this, is the same God who created you and me... It makes me grateful and thankful... It makes me humble and privileged... We really do see God's love in all this creation.

And like every one of those rocks, every single human being is also a different shape and color... Designed by God...

In this Body of Christ, we really are all different. And I confess, I grew up in a pretty sheltered environment, everybody was the same. Cultural differences are a struggle for me... To be honest, I've been fearful of people who are different than I am. And this is not easy for me to talk about!

Another story... I spent twelve and a half years in Austin Minnesota, perhaps one of the most ethnically diverse communities in Minnesota. Forty-six languages spoken in the schools...

One day I was walking to the Y from the church, three young black men were also on the sidewalk and coming toward me. And I admit, I got nervous... They were wearing the chains and saggy pants... I'm not proud of this, but I could feel my body tightening up. Their expressions looked tense, I'm sure mine was tense... We were essentially judging one another.

But when they got close, for some reason I just relaxed and smiled and said "hi." They broke out with the biggest grins, and said "yo!" And just like that we all giggled, like we'd been playing some foolish game... My heart felt joyful, and in some little way I felt connected...

Kris and I went to our old neighborhood in South Minneapolis, Tuesday evening. We just wanted to see and experience what had happened. And again, a big jumble of emotions. We saw stores that were burned-- made me angry... And we also saw Lake Street clean, like it's never been clean before. I guess thousands of people showed up on Saturday to sweep it!
Wow!

We went to 38th and Chicago, the intersection is closed off to cars. There were young families, there were old people and young people... Black people, Hispanic people, White people... Mostly somber... Everyone was respectful! Many people in tears... In one corner there was loud gospel music, in another corner there was loud rap music... People giving away food and water...

We didn't go there to make any point, we just wanted to listen and experience... I'm still mad, angry and frustrated by everything that happened. But it opened my eyes a little bit; I did see hearts that were a lot like mine... And I know, I need to do more listening... and in some little way I felt connected.

So, God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them... God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good.

We will get through this... Because God made it, and because God is in the very middle of it. God is crying with our tears, and God will redeem all things... And for me, that's hope enough...

Amen...

Let us sing...