

Let Us Make Humankind
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Genesis 1:1-2:4a

¹ In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, ²the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters. ³Then God said, ‘Let there be light’; and there was light. ⁴And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. ⁵God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.

⁶ And God said, ‘Let there be a dome in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters.’ ⁷So God made the dome and separated the waters that were under the dome from the waters that were above the dome. And it was so. ⁸God called the dome Sky. And there was evening and there was morning, the second day.

⁹ And God said, ‘Let the waters under the sky be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear.’ And it was so. ¹⁰God called the dry land Earth, and the waters that were gathered together he called Seas. And God saw that it was good. ¹¹Then God said, ‘Let the earth put forth vegetation: plants yielding seed, and fruit trees of every kind on earth that bear fruit with the seed in it.’ And it was so.

¹²The earth brought forth vegetation: plants yielding seed of every kind, and trees of every kind bearing fruit with the seed in it. And God saw that it was good. ¹³And there was evening and there was morning, the third day.

¹⁴ And God said, ‘Let there be lights in the dome of the sky to separate the day from the night; and let them be for signs and for seasons and for days and years, ¹⁵and let them be lights in the dome of the sky to give light upon the earth.’ And it was so. ¹⁶God made the two great lights—the greater light to rule the day and the lesser light to rule the night—and the stars. ¹⁷God set them in the dome of the sky to give light upon the earth, ¹⁸to rule over the day and over the night, and to separate the light from the darkness. And God saw that it was good. ¹⁹And there was evening and there was morning, the fourth day.

²⁰ And God said, ‘Let the waters bring forth swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the dome of the sky.’ ²¹So God created the great sea monsters and every living creature that moves, of every kind, with which the waters swarm, and every winged bird of every kind. And God saw that it was good. ²²God blessed them, saying, ‘Be fruitful and multiply and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth.’ ²³And there was evening and there was morning, the fifth day.

²⁴ And God said, ‘Let the earth bring forth living creatures of every kind: cattle and creeping things and wild animals of the earth of every kind.’ And it was so. ²⁵God made the wild animals of the earth of every kind, and the cattle of every kind, and everything that creeps upon the ground of every kind. And God saw that it was good.

²⁶ Then God said, ‘Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.’

²⁷ So God created humankind in his image,
in the image of God he created them;
male and female he created them.

²⁸God blessed them, and God said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.’ ²⁹God said, ‘See, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit; you shall have them for food. ³⁰And to every beast of the earth, and to every bird of the air, and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has

the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food.’ And it was so. ³¹God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day. ¹ Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all their multitude. ²And on the seventh day God finished the work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all the work that he had done. ³So God blessed the seventh day and hallowed it, because on it God rested from all the work that he had done in creation.

⁴ These are the generations of the heavens and the earth when they were created.

Matthew 28:16-20

¹⁶ Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. ¹⁷When they saw him, they worshipped him; but some doubted. ¹⁸And Jesus came and said to them, ‘All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.’

Today is Trinity Sunday, but why does that matter? Understanding the trinity means understanding God, which is why we come here each week. Understanding the trinity also means understanding ourselves, which is what humankind has striven to do since humans began pondering what their purpose was on this earth, in this life. Our reading from Matthew is the jumping off point for those early followers who were trying to explain to others that they were monotheistic, worshipping only one God as their brothers and sisters, the Jews, were doing and yet how that same God involved believing in the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. It falls in today’s readings for its Trinitarian language.

In the same way, although we can find individual references to the three persons of the trinity throughout the whole of the Bible, we can look to the very beginning of the Bible to find the earliest Trinitarian reading. Admittedly our reading from Genesis does not speak of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in those terms, but those aren’t the only ways to speak of God in three persons. Some use words like Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer. Here in Genesis? We read: “In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters. Then God said, ‘Let there be light’; and there was light.”

God created; a wind swept; there was light. If this seems vague, let me make it less obscure. We read from the beginning of John: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.” And there was light. From the very beginning Christ has been a light to creation. Shine, Jesus, shine.

And we read from the second chapter of Acts: “When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability.” A wind from God swept over the face of the waters.

And God created, the most familiar to us. Of course, just because we can name the various persons of the trinity and affirm our belief that all are one God, doesn't mean we can easily explain how. That's okay. Actually, that's great. Our urge to tidily explain God often comes out of a desire to control God by shaping what God is, and what God is not, by our words. But God is far, far bigger than our minds can comprehend and the mystery of God in three persons is evidence of that. Allowing the mystery of God to remain mystery lets God be bigger than us and lets God be in control of defining God.

So how does all of this help us understand ourselves? We were created in relationship with God from the very start. “Then God said, ‘Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion [not domination] over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.’ So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.” If we were created in God's image, how does what we know about God in three persons affect what we know about ourselves?

Let's begin with God as creator. If God is a creator, takes pleasure in creation, then it follows that we, too, create and receive pleasure from the created. How do you feel when you experience the creativity of dance? art? music? film? books? It need not be your creation but creation of humankind's. And it need not be what we define as fine art. What about the solution to a complex engineering problem? What about the wonders of modern medical science? I imagine you feel like I do around manifestations of creativity. My spirit is lifted, my hope is restored. When we create, we bring that same spirit-lifting, hope-restoring to others. What a joy that we, too, can create.

As for the wind of the Spirit? We certainly cannot become wind but that is thinking too literally about the Spirit. Just as we do not become God to be creators, we need not become the Spirit to bring the effects of the Spirit. What do we know about wind? When the air is stale, we welcome a breeze. When the air is August-heavy with humidity, we welcome a wind. When the wind comes, it carries change, whether bringing warm or cool air or, in more extreme cases, changing lives like tornadoes and hurricanes. The wind is an agent of change. Change can be welcome **and** it can be scary; either way

change propels us through life, ever creating new opportunities. Like the wind, like the Spirit, we can be agents of change, the easy ones and the tough ones.

And the light of Christ. Hopefully, your time here in these pews and in life with fellow believers has already shown you how to be Christ's light to others. After this long, gray winter, we recognize clearly the joy that light brings. We have the privilege of lifting others through the good news of God's love. The last verse of *Shine, Jesus, Shine* is "As we gaze on your kingly brightness, so our faces display your likeness; ever changing from glory to glory, mirrored here may our lives tell your story." Created in God's image, our faces display God's likeness and we strive to have our lives mirror the likeness of Jesus' life.

When we better understand the trinity, we better understand who and how we were created to be. Bring hope through your creation and through your care of the already-created. Bring change where change is needed; and if you are unable to effect change, do what you can to keep from impeding change. Bring light, even the smallest, for it makes a difference in any darkness. We are fearfully and wonderfully made in God's whole image. Praise God!

Let us pray: In your image, O God, we humbly serve you. Reveal yourself to others through us, we pray. Amen.