

Genesis 1:1-2:4a

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep; and the Spirit of God was moving over the face of the waters. And God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light.

And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. God called the light Day, and the darkness Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.

And God said, "Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters." So God made the firmament and separated the waters that were under the firmament from the waters that were above the firmament. And it was so. God called the firmament heaven. And there was evening and there was morning, the second day.

And God said, "Let the waters under the heavens be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear." And it was so. God called the dry land Earth, and the waters that were gathered together God called the Seas. And God saw that it was good. Then God said, "Let the earth put forth vegetation: plants yielding seed, and fruit trees bearing fruit in which is their seed, each according to its kind upon the earth. And it was so. The earth brought forth vegetation: plants yielding seed according to their own kinds, and trees bearing fruit in which is their seed, each according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. And there was evening and there was morning, the third day.

And God said, "Let there be lights in the firmament of the heavens to separate the day from the night; and let them be for signs and for seasons and for days and years, and let them be lights in the firmament of the heavens to give light upon the earth." And it was so. God made the two great lights--the greater light to rule the day and the lesser light to rule the night—God made the stars also. And God set them in the firmament of the heavens to give light upon the earth, to rule over the day and over the night, and to separate the light from the darkness. And God saw that it was good. And there was evening and there was morning, the fourth day.

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

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. God 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.

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." So God created humankind in God's own image, in the image of God was the human being created; male and female God created them. God 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." God 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. And 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. God saw everything that was made, and indeed, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day. Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all their multitude. And on the seventh day God finished the work which God had done, and on the seventh day rested from all the work which God had done. So God blessed the seventh day and hallowed it, because on it God rested from all the work that God had done in creation.

Sermon 6/19/11 by Susi Kawolics

The Sunday after Pentecost is always Trinity Sunday. This year, it also happens to be Father's Day. It seems perhaps that the reading we just heard from the lectionary is more suited to Father's Day than to the theme of the Trinity. After all, when we think of Trinity, many of us would use the words "Father, Son and Holy Spirit" as a way of describing the triune God. And the Father is also the person of the Trinity we associate with the Creator. So if this passage is about the Creator and the creation, how does it even relate to the concept of the Trinity? Surely it wasn't chosen as the lectionary reading to go with the Father's Day theme, which is not even acknowledged on the liturgical calendar!

But then, there are really no scriptures which are specific to the Trinity. Last week we celebrated Pentecost, and we read the passage about the Pentecost event. On Easter we read about the resurrection, on Christmas about the birth of Christ. But the Bible itself contains no developed doctrine of the Trinity, and the word Trinity does not even appear anywhere in the Scriptures. It is a teaching that grew out of the desire of early believers to explain who God was for them in light of their experience of Jesus, his life, death, resurrection, and the sending of the spirit. But it wasn't a fully formulated concept until around about 350 AD, over 300 years after the Christian church first began.

Those early Christians, like us, had a desire for explanations, for understanding. It is human nature to want an order to our thinking, and to talk and think about concepts in a language that makes sense to us. The concept of the Trinity is a way of making sense and a way of explaining who God is. It is a way to make a vast, utterly transcendent creator of the universe fit into our tiny human minds.

The creation story does have a bearing on this concept of the Trinity, and on this desire for order and understanding about God. It provides us with a glimpse into some aspects of God. For most of us, this story tells of a God who has been since the beginning, and of a God who has had a hand in fashioning all that exists. But in order to get an even deeper understanding of what this creation story has to tell us about God, it helps to know a little about its writing.

Although this reading comes from the first Chapter of the book of Genesis, which is the first book in our Bible, Genesis was not the first book of the Bible to be written. It is believed that this book was written in about 500 BC by the priestly people of the Hebrews. This was written during the time in the history of the Israelites when they were in exile in Babylon. Their ancestors had long since seen the demise of their great Kingdom that had been established under King David, in around 1000 BC. They had witnessed the division of their Kingdom, and then the loss of their homeland, and the destruction of their temple. By the time they were in exile, they had lost everything, and had been taken away from all that had been home to them. During this period, they were living in an alien land. They no longer had their temple, so they could not worship according to the rituals they knew and loved. They were out of the rhythm of life they

had been accustomed to. All the structures that had enabled them to keep their faith were gone. Their religious life, and therefore their whole life, was in chaos.

While the Jews were in exile, their priests did all that they could to help their people remember and live out their faith. It was out of this situation that they came to write the creation story we read. In our passage, we hear about a God who brings order. This beautiful passage pulses with cadence of each new day bringing a new part of creation. We hear the words repeated over and over: And God said let there be..., and after each day, "it was good." This is a story which emphasizes the separation of those things which are different: day and night, dry land and water, sun, moon and stars. This story tells of a God who brings an order out of chaos, who could transform the waste and the void and the mess of life into something beautiful and orderly and good.

Sometimes we think that this story proclaims that God has created the world out of nothingness. But in fact, the Jewish people never had the concept that the world was created by God out of nothing. According to Rev. Dr. Gene McAfee who taught my Old Testament course, when we read that in the beginning the earth was without form and was void, a more accurate translation would have been that in the beginning the earth was "waste and schmaste" as he puts it. This story tells of a God who is actually fashioning a big mess into something inhabitable. This is a story that the Jewish people would take hope in during the time of their exile. Although they could not see out of the mess that their lives were in, they could put their trust in a God who is a God of order.

As humans, we may look at nature and ask ourselves where the order is. It seems that many parts of the natural world are not that orderly. Mountains and trees are not symmetrical, temperatures and weather patterns are not predictable, animals and plants are a random assortment of colors, shapes and sizes, and I have heard that there is no straight line in all of nature! And yet, even among the seemingly disordered creation, there is an order. Although it cannot be readily seen, there are patterns that have been identified and discovered. For example, we now know about various mathematical formulas, like the Fibonacci pattern, which can tell us the number of petals a flower has. Or the golden spiral, which is a spiral that in every quarter turn increases its radius by a factor of 1.6 is a formula found in nature everywhere from seeds to pine cones to shells.

Not only do we find these patterns in nature, this sense of order, we also discover more and more how interconnected all of nature is. The more we learn about the human body, or about our atmosphere, the more we learn the interconnections between the various actions we take as humans, the various phenomena in nature. Perhaps you have heard the term butterfly effect. In essence, this is the term for the *sensitive dependence on initial conditions*; where a small change at one place results in large differences to a later state. For example, the presence or absence of a butterfly flapping its wings could lead to the creation or absence of a hurricane. (Wikipedia)

We are all woven together in an intricate web in a way we can barely even fathom. We are all in relationship with one another, and with all of creation.

So not only do the trinity and creation come together when talking about order and an understanding about who God is, but also in the idea of relationship. And this concept of relationship is what lies at the heart of our doctrine of the trinity.

The creation story points to relationship in two ways. First of all, as mentioned, the goodness of creation is interconnected and relational. But there is also another way throughout our scripture passage that shows this relational side of God. In the story, when God is forming

humans, there is a shift in language. God says: "Let *us* make humankind in *our* image, according to *our* likeness." There is a sense that God is somehow in a relationship with Godself, that God is somehow plural. This relationship of God with Godself is given the name of the Trinity. In our Genesis passage we hear about God as Creator, and how in the beginning, God's spirit was moving over the face of the waters. In the first Chapter of the gospel of John we hear that in the beginning was the word, that the word was with God, that the word was God. John then goes on to talk about Jesus as the living word. So in a sense, the concept of the trinity, of the creator, of Christ and the Holy Spirit, is present in this passage, in the beginning, even though it is not overtly stated that way.

This Trinitarian, relational God is the God who loves us, who wants to draw us into relationship.

The Psalmist writes in our Psalm for today: "When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars that you have established; what are human beings that you are mindful of them, mortals that you care for them? Yet you have made them a little lower than God, and crowned them with glory and honor." We are nothing in comparison with God, and yet, God has loved us so much that God wants more than anything to be in relationship with us. And in order that we might come into closer and deeper relationship with God, God went so far as becoming one of us, as coming to this earth and walking among us as the historical Jesus. And then, so that we would not be left comfortless, we have been given the gift of the Holy Spirit to walk with us and abide with us always. In this way, as Jesus says in our gospel, we remember his words: "I am with you always, to the end of the age."

So can we trust in this God who loves us this much, who wants to bring order, who wants to be with us? We usually do not have trouble trusting in God when our lives are going along fine and orderly. But what about when we are in disarray, discord, turmoil, confusion? It is also in these times that can we put our trust in God who is holding everything in hands that cradle us and shelter us, a God who will bring us out of our turmoil someday, somehow, in ways we can't even see or imagine.

So in the end, Trinity Sunday reminds us that we have a God who is creator, one who is able to bring order out of chaos, a God who is relationship, who desires relationship with us. May we trust that God is with us always, for God loved us enough to create us, to redeem us and to sustain us each and every day of our lives now and for evermore. Amen.