

Go!

Trinity Sunday, this is the Sunday which marks our transition into those Sundays between major events in the life of the church and believers with one last named day. Today we use this term frequently through what is called the Trinitarian formula—in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. We speak of our God as One but Triune...which can be easily justified through the Genesis text which we have just read, but which has produced more confusion than answers for the faithful through the centuries. Mostly, those of the Christian faith just use the doctrine without understanding the implications and focus on one of the members named within the doctrine to form their understanding of the relationship God wishes to have with this created world. The poetry found in the Genesis story of creation doesn't enlighten us about history, cosmology, or science as we understand those disciplines today. These verses were never intended to do that, and even if it was their intent, their science and history would have been out of date shortly after these words were penned. Instead of cosmological conjecture, the Hebrew creation poetry elucidated truths that transcend both science and history. GK Chesterton rightly observed that "fairy tales are more than true: not because they tell us dragons exist, but because they tell us that dragons can be beaten." The fundamental truth in the creation origin story is that God is at the center of all. God inspired this description of creation because it conveys important images about God's fellowship with humanity, the goodness of creation, and human dignity. Because they were written in ancient times, these images are expressed in undeniably ancient terms, not in an unattainable universal form, but one which accommodated human's abilities. (John Calvin's term). Calvin understood this as God's accommodation for the sake of covenantal communion; that this was a divine condescension. This origin story's ultimate point is covenant communion as God carefully constructs a world for the sake of human flourishing. Each of the first three days prepares the space for an aspect of creation later filled in in the final three days. This meticulous attention indicates creation's importance. Repeatedly God views creation as good. When we encounter folks we often begin the encounter asking "Where do you come from?" We use this as a way to tell stories that identify our origins...which is basically what Genesis is doing as it describes the origin of humankind...and in doing so provide us for very rich soil in which to root our identities. Neither history nor science address this need human beings have which is lifted up in Psalm 8:4—"What are human beings that you are mindful of them, mortals that you care for them?" Genesis

and our scriptures give us this answer. So if we turn to Genesis 1, what truths can we find there about our identity? Where do we come from? First, we come from a God who sees. Seven times in the creation narrative, God pauses to reflect on the handiwork so far. “And God saw.” Well before the work is done God steps back to behold all that is taking shape before God’s eyes. God is like a musician who thrills at a swelling harmony, like a poet who gasps at a beautiful turn of phrase, God lingers over creation—every leaf, every wing, every stream, every child. God is not in a hurry, and God’s interest in the world is far from utilitarian. God’s gaze is the gaze of an artist, keen, perceptive and patient. God observes. God attends. God notices. Humanity comes from a God who pays delighted attention. God sees. Humanity comes from a world created good. Before there was evil, there was goodness. Before there was Original Sin, there was Original Blessing. Often we focus on what happens later in order to get our theologies balanced and our egos properly squashed we forget that Genesis 1 is a chapter overflowing with goodness and blessing. In fact, God pronounces blessing on the created order three times. God calls creation “good” and “very good” seven times. We should notice that despite all world denying theologies and philosophies Genesis affirms the world as the good creation of the good God. All that is there is good. What would it mean for our approach in a culture increasingly numb to violence, war, corruption and greed to believe that God’s created world is still good? What would it be like to embody the goodness that is our heritage; to look around and see as God saw: everything that God made was good, indeed was very good; to believe that the actual default setting of the world is not evil, but good? Genesis tells us we come from a God who makes new things. According to Genesis, God created something new each day for six days. God was not only a creator, but also an innovator at the world’s beginning, calling forth new things that didn’t exist until God created them. Do we believe that God is no longer an innovator? Do we believe in a God that is stagnant or one who is vibrant? Do we believe in a God whose work is done or is on-going? Frederick Buechner would suggest that if we look around and only see the same things each and every day, we are being blind. Instead, every morning we wake to something that in all eternity never was before and never will be again. And the you who wakes up each morning was never the same before and will never be the same again, either. Additionally, Genesis reminds us that we come from the morning and the evening, the light and the darkness. Sometimes we retreat into versions of the world that are rife with dualisms: we call the spirit good and the body bad. We

believe that light comes from God and the darkness from the devil. But the Genesis narrative contradicts these oppositions. The God who is spirit blesses the body; the God who creates light calls the evening “good”. The God who brings order also hovers over the chaotic deep. Barbara Brown Taylor writes about this issue. “The way most people talk about darkness, you would think it comes from a whole different deity, but no. To be human is to live by sunlight and moonlight, with anxiety and delight, admitting limits and transcending them, falling down and rising up. To want a life with only half of these things in it is to want half a life, shutting the other half away where it will not interfere with one’s bright fantasies of the way things ought to be.” Finally Genesis tells us we come from the likeness of God. Nowhere within scriptures are we told for sure what Genesis means with this *Imago Dei*. Is this about spiritual traits or physical ones? Is it about consciousness or creativity? The possibilities are pretty much limitless. But what the Genesis story does confirm is that God’s mark is imprinted in my very being and the very being of all other humans. As individual human beings we might ignore this, or distort it, but the mark of God is always there. Whether or not I acknowledge it, in my being I reflect something of God—of God’s joy, of God’s intentions, of God’s love, and God’s beauty just by virtue of existing on God’s earth. I am God’s and so God is mine. Genesis also tells us we come from a God who rests. In an American culture where every hour of every day is measured in profits gained or advantages lost, the concept of Sabbath doesn’t come easily or naturally to many. We are often startled and humbled to remember that God rested. We often fail to note that the Sabbath is the only thing in the creation account God called holy. We should probably pay more attention to that fact. So when we pose this question whether to others, what is to be gained? We should pose it not to highlight differences, but to reach across those differences and learn how very much we have in common. Genesis 1 assures us that we are on solid ground when we seek to find those connections. Where to we all come from? We come from the best of beginnings. We come from a glorious Creator. We come from the loving heart of God. The God who made and is still in the process here of making a world balanced, ordered, structured, and designed; a God whom we are to reflect, to mirror. We are not to act as free agents of our own human desires. The commandments given at Sinai prohibit the making of graven images of God because God has already created a self-image on earth...us. It is time for us, maybe past time, to end this foolish and incorrect notion that it is our world. It is, and always has been, God’s world. Really how dare we claim to

be made in the image of this God and act as if God had and has had nothing to do with it? Later in Genesis 2 the second creation story has God breathe life into the dirt of the earth and place humans within a Garden with a task. In ancient Hebrew '*abad*' is used to describe this task which early translations from 17th c. context translated as "till" or "cultivate". But a more accurate translation would be to serve and protect it. This image makes us partners with God and God's creation. The image of servant of God and God's world has the possibility to make us new creatures, helping us see our rightful place as God's servants. The world, the cosmos is not meant to be our oyster, but it is God's pearl. We have been assigned the twin tasks of serving this pearl and protecting it from all abuse, especially abuse from ourselves. If we take Genesis as our guide, the reason we should not create representative images because we are the *imago dei* God created. We are to be God's representatives according to what Matthew 28's verses for today re-enforce about our mission. We are to go...to go and make disciples, to go and teach all that Jesus has taught about God and love, to obey and follow those teachings because Jesus has illustrated them for us. We are to go to all nations...and to remember that as we go we bear God's image and represent God's desire for all to belong in community and live abundantly...and also while we are going, we do not go alone because God is not done with creation or us...but is with us always. In the name of our Triune God...Father, Son and Holy Spirit who within God's own self and love has room for all that has been created and will be created.