

At last we've come to the Sunday I know you've all been waiting for. Yes! It's Trinity Sunday! In reality, of course, this completely snuck up on you, didn't it! Unless you've got one of those pocket calendars from the Church Pension Fund. This is the Sunday that causes most clergy to duck and cover. The possibility of trying to clarify our understanding of God as three persons in one substance tends to strike fear in the preacher's heart.

I could approach this with an intensive theological study beginning with the Ante-Nicene Fathers and continuing on through the interpretations of John Calvin and Martin Luther. Or not. I would hate to look out at the congregation and see less hardy souls falling into a coma, or folks doing what my father did when a sermon was too far gone – namely solving quadratic equations on the back of the bulletin

Besides, that would be like deciding that poetry ought to be explained, using a grammar textbook. And it's the great poetry of the creation story from Genesis that starts to not explain but show us who God is, what the depth of the cosmos is, and who we are in the midst of it all. So let us begin here.

B'reshit barah Elohim v'hashamayim, et v'haretz... in the beginning of God's creating, the earth was wild and waste, utter darkness covered the deep, and the Spirit of God was brooding over the face of the waters, swooping like a mother eagle hovering over her young. Then God said, "Let there be light! And from the depths of darkness, there came forth light."

There is a tendency for us to think of the trinity in terms of God the Father starting everything off, God the Son coming into the game at half-time and God the Holy Spirit as a late substitution sent in after Easter. But here we have Trinity entire in just the first three verses of the Bible: God The Creator moving within God The Spirit and speaking through God The Word to bring order out of chaos.

So there are some other important Trinitarian things to learn from Genesis. We note that God does not create order from the chaos in a sudden fireworks display. Rather there is a glorious process of creation

over “days” - whatever length of time that may represent. It should make us think more of evolution than of a magic show.

First there was a separation of light from that deep primeval darkness, making it a coherent presence. It is not that darkness was destroyed, but that it was given its place in the order of things – and it was good.

Then the raging waters that covered everything were pulled back, so that earth itself stood forth – and it was good.

The next thing to see is that the Trinity does not bring off creation alone, all by Godself. Rather, God works in co-creation through the things that have already been made. God calls on the waters themselves to bring forth swarms of living things – fish and sea monsters, and birds. Then God charges the earth to bring forth living creatures – lizards and puppies, chattering monkeys and squawking chickens – and it was all good.

But when it comes to us, we ourselves, God is back in the creating business solo, by Godself: “Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness... So God created humankind in God’s image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. God blessed them, and said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it.’”

That last line is a part of what brings loud criticism down on Judaism and Christianity. “This teaches that human beings are commanded to run roughshod over the whole earth, taking whatever we want.” But I would suggest that it actually represents something very different.

When God has finished six days of calling into being, and takes a break for Sabbath, the earth is not finished. It is not something perfect, sweet and completely safe - FDA approved so to speak. There are unfinished edges of chaos in the mix. That is why God’s blessing on us includes that command to ‘fill the earth and subdue it,’ because there is still disorder to be faced - the rough edges of earthquakes, mudslides and tornadoes, of cancer cells and hunger after poor harvests. There is the disorder of sin, which we are given the freedom to choose or reject.

What if the disorder which is still a part of the creation is where we find our vocation as creatures: to make free moral choices, to exercise our creativity, to do the work of tending the garden, which of course has weeds, slugs and hungry rabbits, even in paradise. This is our calling as those in the image of God.

I want you to look at the front of your bulletin. Reproduced there is probably one of the most famous icons ever written: Anton Rublev's depiction of the Trinity. This has been a focus for prayer for many people over the years, including me. It shows three figures arranged around an altar, their heads bending slightly toward each other, the lines of their bodies forming a circle. The figure at the bottom left represents the Father; at the top is the Son; around to the bottom right is the Holy Spirit. The circle of their being with each other displays the uninterrupted flow of love between the three persons.

Now look at the front of the altar, where you can see a small rectangular opening. This is meant to represent the place in the altar, for humanity to enter and become one with the Trinity. There is a place for us at the table. This reflects the longstanding teaching of the Orthodox Churches, that all of God's interactions with us are meant to lead humanity into divinity. Here is our destiny, the completion of creation and growth into God's fullness.

We are not part of an easy, completed creation that has no pain or flaws. But neither are we forgotten or abandoned. We are created to be one with God in the love that flows eternally between the three persons of the Trinity, the glorious love that beats at the heart of creation.