

Genesis 1:1 – 2: 4, Matthew 28: 16-20

Peace in Our Genes

Today is Trinity Sunday. The Book of Common Worship, a guide for our corporate worship in the Presbyterian Church (USA), says it is a “theological festival that celebrates the nature and mission of the triune God.” Right now, I can almost sense the pastors among us sitting in the pew muttering under their breath “Takako, don’t go there!” Trinity is a Christian doctrine, a theological concept, that is believed to be the hardest to grasp as it is to explain. God who is the Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit, three-in-one and one-in-three. There’s plenty of proof that anyone who dare attempt to theologially unpack this doctrine on a Sunday morning would be sure to put the congregation to sleep. I’ve been warned.

But theologians didn’t just make this up out of nothing. As with all doctrines of any value to the life of faith, it arose out of authentic experience of our forebears in faith, to which the Holy Scriptures bear witness. Though the term “Trinity” is not written anywhere in the Bible, its images and expressions permeate the stories the Bible tells.

So, today, you’ll be spared of theological analysis of this doctrine. Instead, let us lift up our own experiences of the Divine in the light of the Scriptures, and listen for what the God of Trinity is teaching us as the community of faith today.

Have you ever been asked a question “when do you feel closest to God?” I’ve heard this question posed often at spiritual retreat or in the Bible study. I remember not too long ago, I asked a similar question “where do you see God?” during the Children’s Message here, and our dear Shiloh said, bless her heart, “Church.”

But more often, I hear people say it is when they are out in nature, whether hiking in the mountains or strolling along the beach. You all have chosen to live in this beautiful Jemez Valley, at the risk of being labeled rednecks, as Pastor Laura reminded us last week, so I’m sure you can relate.

Just the other day, Dee shared with me how her late mother, whose birthday we honor today, was a big hiker and how much she loved being out in nature. Dee let me listen to the recording of her mother praying what I would characterize as a prayer of thanksgiving and praise, for the beauty of the mountains and the fields and fresh air that gave her such a sense of peace. With Dee’s permission I share with you that next week, Dee and her sisters will hike to a

particular spot her mother liked very much to scatter her ashes. She's going to be returned to where she knew she belonged, in perfect peace.

For my late father, who grew up near the seashore in Japan facing the Pacific Ocean, it was when he was scuba diving, under the sea. He was fond of saying "those who don't know the world under the sea know only a half of the beauty of the world." After he suffered a heart attack, he was no longer able to dive in the ocean, so he started climbing. He made it to the top of Mt. Fuji, over 12,000 feet, three times.

He also used to worry me when I was small; he would say, if given an opportunity to go into the space, even without a guarantee of safe return, he would go in a heartbeat. --- He loved to feel he was one with nature. At my father's memorial service, the pastor read selections from my father's travel journal my mother had given to him. To our surprise, my father, who was not a Christian, referred in awe to "his Creator" or the "Creator of the Universe" numerous times.

A patient in a behavioral health facility I used to visit as a chaplain once told me, though he was not religious, he felt such comfort whenever he hugged and talked to a tree; he felt healing deep within him. These are testimonies of our authentic connection with nature. Something deep within us, without our trying, respond to the creation on the individual level. The experience is one of being one with the creation and with the Creator, being restored to wholeness, a sense of living life in full, in companionship, and of peace. Perhaps for some of you, it's when you're fishing on the river.

Then there's Church, just as our Shiloh said. There's an emerging movement called Wild Church network, made up of Christians and other Spiritual seekers, even Presbyterians. They describe themselves as "a movement initiated by Spirit that includes all communities gathering outside of buildings for the purposes of reconnecting with the Holy incarnated in and between all things." (<https://www.wildchurchnetwork.com>)

Term "Eco spirituality" is a pretty new word, and Wikipedia defines as "'a manifestation of the spiritual connection between human beings and the environment.'" But the desire within us, the longing we have for such connection is ancient and universal.

So, both as individuals and together as a spiritual community, there is something deep within us that calls us back to connection, restoration to wholeness, and to relationship with the Creator and the creation in peace, as if it's in our genes.

This Creation story in Genesis tells us of that world we know, at our core, that we belong and long to return. It is a picture of what we were made to be part of. The world God made, giving shape and form to what was a formless void, bringing order in time and function through God's Word.

And God finished this creative process in seven days. The number seven was symbolic in ancient near eastern and Israelite culture. It carried in it a sense of "fullness" or "completeness." But after six days of creative activity, on the seventh day, God took a break. So, this seventh day of rest is an integral part of fullness and completeness of God's creation.

On the countertop in my kitchen, I have an attractive black frame that contains the words "Even God Took a Day Off." My spiritual direction mentor had it made for me, knowing I needed a constant reminder. Without a day of rest, our week is never quite complete nor "full," no matter how much we think we accomplished. Sounds ironic to our modern minds, but we know it's true in our bones.

And God created by speaking, which means Creation is not accidental but intentional. God as speaker is a metaphor for God's creative activity; let this happen and let that happen. But on the 6th day, when it was time to make humankind, God said "Let US make humankind in OUR image, according to OUR likeness." God is having an inner reflection within God's self. God's proper pronoun is We/Us/Ours. God is relationship.

Then, once humankind is created, God spoke to them also. We have a part in God's creative activity. God spoke the Word of blessing that is at once a command: "Let them have dominion" over all those creatures, which means let the humankind be their caretaker. God is here sharing power with the humankind so that we can be the care-taker of the created world, in human and nonhuman spheres, according to God's created order of wholeness and fullness.

That is the world we belong to; that is the relationship we are meant to have with God's creation and with one another. That is the Way Christ has entrusted his disciples to teach all peoples and promise to help us to the end of the days.

Human thoughts and imagination can never fully capture our awesome God, but the fullness and completeness of life, the peace of God's ordered world is in our gene as creation of the triune God.

God who spoke the Word to create the world, then gave that Word to the world in the person of Jesus Christ. And when Jesus was to depart from the World, he gave God's breath, the

Holy Spirit to the world. And the Holy Spirit empowers us to obey God, which means to listen to God and live according to God's Word. Trinity is not a static theological doctrine, but an expression for this mutual self-giving, empowering movement within God very Self that sustains the world.

In this triune God, we live and move and have our being. This Triune God gave birth to us, and the ever-moving Spirit brings us into the mystery of unity with Christ and with our Creator God, so that our life as a community of faith in this God reflects the same mutual self-giving.

When we look around in the world, it's easy to notice incompleteness and brokenness, rather than completeness and wholeness, and distress rather than peace. Instead of living in mutual self-giving, we begrudge and withhold ourselves from one another. And it's this world into Jesus sends us, to create a community that mirrors the inner relationship of Trinity. The Genesis story and Jesus's words in Matthew guides the way you and I relate to our world today, and Jesus is with us until the end of the world.

In the name of the Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.