

Sunday, June 7, 2020 The Holy Trinity, Year A

Announcements

Today is Trinity Sunday, the day when we celebrate the divine mystery of one God in three persons. The Trinity is not something we can explain or understand in our human experience, but then, that is part of what makes God God, the Creator, above and beyond the understanding of the creature.

You will soon be receiving a letter announcing our plans to return to worship in our building soon. I won't say anymore about that now because we want everyone to get word at the same time, so watch your mail for the important announcement.

Thank you again for your continued support of the ministry of St. Mark's during the past couple months, it is proof that the church exists outside these walls just as vitally as in the pews.

Introduction

Though the word *trinity* is not found in the scriptures, today's second reading includes the apostolic greeting that begins the liturgy: The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all. In the gospel Jesus sends his disciples forth to baptize in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. More than a doctrine, the Trinity expresses the heart of our faith: we have experienced the God of creation made known in Jesus Christ and with us always through the Holy Spirit. We celebrate the mystery of the Holy Trinity in word and sacrament, as we profess the creed, and as we are sent into the world to bear witness to our faith.

Confession and Forgiveness

All may make the sign of the cross, the sign marked at baptism, as the presiding minister begins.

Blessed be the holy Trinity, ✝ one God,

whose steadfast love is everlasting,
whose faithfulness endures from generation to generation.

Amen.

Trusting in the mercy of God, let us confess our sin.

Silence is kept for reflection.

Reconciling God,

**we confess that we do not trust your abundance,
and we deny your presence in our lives.**

**We place our hope in ourselves
and rely on our own efforts.**

We fail to believe that you provide enough for all.

We abuse your good creation for our own benefit.

**We fear difference and do not welcome others
as you have welcomed us.**

We sin in thought, word, and deed.

By your grace, forgive us;

through your love, renew us;

and in your Spirit, lead us;

so that we may live and serve you in newness of life. Amen.

Beloved of God,

by the radical abundance of divine mercy

we have peace with God through ✝ Christ Jesus,

through whom we have obtained grace upon grace.

Our sins are forgiven.

Let us live now in hope.

For hope does not disappoint,

because God's love has been poured into our hearts
through the Holy Spirit.

Amen.

Prayer of the Day

Almighty Creator and ever-living God: we worship your glory, eternal Three-in-One, and we praise your power, majestic One-in-Three. Keep us steadfast in this faith, defend us in all adversity, and bring us at last into your presence, where you live in endless joy and love, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Amen.

First Reading: Genesis 1:1--2:4a

At the beginning of time, God the Creator, God the powerful Word, and God the life-giving Spirit form the earth and all its inhabitants. God sees that all this created work is good and then rests on the seventh day.

¹In 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.

⁶And 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.

⁹And 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.

¹⁴And 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.

²⁰And 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.

²⁴And 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.

²⁶Then 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.”

²⁷So 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.

^{2:1}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.

^{4a}These are the generations of the heavens and the earth when they were created.

Psalm: Psalm 8

How majestic is your name in all the earth! (Ps. 8:1)

¹O | LORD our Lord,

how majestic is your name in | all the earth!—

²**you whose glory is chanted above the heavens out of the mouths of in- | fants and children;**

you have set up a fortress against your enemies, to silence the foe | and avenger.

³When I consider your heavens, the work | of your fingers,
the moon and the stars you have set | in their courses,

⁴**what are mere mortals that you should be mind- | ful of them,
human beings that you should | care for them? R**

⁵Yet you have made them little less | than divine;
with glory and hon- | or you crown them.

⁶**You have made them rule over the works | of your hands;
you have put all things un- | der their feet:**

⁷all | flocks and cattle,
even the wild beasts | of the field,

⁸**the birds of the air, the fish | of the sea,
and whatever passes along the paths | of the sea.**

⁹O | LORD our Lord,
how majestic is your name in | all the earth! **R**

Second Reading: 2 Corinthians 13:11-13

Paul closes a challenging letter to the Corinthians with an appeal to Christian fellowship grounded in the triune harmony of Christ's grace, God's love, and the Spirit's partnership.

[Paul writes:] ¹¹Finally, brothers and sisters, farewell. Put things in order, listen to my appeal, agree with one another, live in peace; and the God of love and peace will be with you. ¹²Greet one another with a holy kiss. All the saints greet you.

¹³The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with all of you.

Gospel: Matthew 28:16-20

After his resurrection, Jesus summons his remaining disciples and commissions them to baptize and teach all nations in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

¹⁶Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. ¹⁷When they saw him, they worshiped 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.”

Children’s Sermon

Sermon

The past week saw three funerals that will remain in my memory probably until my own. One was the funeral of George Floyd whose death led thousands of people across the nation to react, some properly, some otherwise. The second was the funeral of Tyrone Gibson. Tyrone was a 14-year-old member of Christ Lutheran Church at 13th and Derry Streets in the Allison Hill district of Harrisburg. He was active in his church, he participated in Pr. Drew Stockstill’s installation not long ago, and he attended church camp, probably alongside some of our own youth, perhaps with some of your children. Tyrone’s funeral was not nationally publicized but it drew the attention of hundreds of people right here in our hometown. The third funeral I will long remember is that of our own dear sister, Pearl Engelman. In contrast to the funerals of George Floyd and Tyrone Gibson, Pearl’s funeral was attended by seven members of her church family under the shade of a huge maple tree in her hometown of Frackville, where she was buried alongside her parents.

I am sure there were many other funerals during the week that had one, two, or no one attending, and many who left this life without any recognition at all.

There is one thing, though, that ties all these saints together; the public, the private, and the unnoticed, and that is the love of God. In God's heart, EVERY life is precious and EVERY one of God's beloved children receives the same recognition, the same reception, and the same eternal life in the Kingdom of Heaven as any other. That's what a relationship with the Triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is all about.

This past week the Presiding Bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, Rev. Elizabeth Eaton, recorded a message for Trinity Sunday addressing the state of affairs in our country today. That sermon can be seen in its entirety at www.elca.org, but I'd like to share a few thoughts from her message here.

Bishop Eaton says, *“God said, and creation began.” She goes on to say, “Martin Luther put it this way, ‘So also the Christian church agrees that in this description [of creation] there is indicated the mystery of the Holy Trinity, the Father created through the Son who Moses called the Word, and over this creative work brooded the Holy Spirit.’ Later, God says, ‘Let us make humankind in our image’. This is the glorious relationship with God that spills out into all creation. God is not a lone ranger. And all of God shows up, delighting in creation, caring for creation, weeping for creation, redeeming creation”*

We are made, all of us in all our diversity, in the image and likeness of the Triune God, we are made to live in relationship with God and with one another. There is unity between God and God's creatures that reflects the unity of the threefold Godhead; unity became physical in the incarnation of Jesus as one of us, unity is assured for

all eternity in the power and presence of the Holy Spirit, and today unity is made visible in the Church where humankind presents God's image to the world.

Again, from Bishop Eaton, *“God is Spirit, closer than our own breath. And this is how God as Trinity shows up today. God is Creator. God created diversity, beautiful, vital, alive. We must reject calls for colorblindness. [Colorblindness] diminishes and washes out God's gift of diversity....We should be color amazed, recognizing the strength that comes with all our many colors [and differences.]”*

In verse 17 of this morning's Gospel reading, Matthew tells us, according to the NRSV, “some doubted”. A more literal translation of that verse, though, is that “they worshipped him **and doubted**”! When Lutheran pastor and theologian Mark Allen Powell asked the translator why the NRSV added “some” he was told that one can't worship and doubt at the same time. Powell then invited him to come to a Lutheran church where he said, “we do it all the time”!

That's not to say anything derogatory about the Lutheran church, it is simply an admission that we all have questions, uncertainties, fears and insecurities, especially in trying times like pandemics and violent protests and senseless deaths. But we worship God because we believe God makes a difference and will one day wipe all doubt away.

We may not be able to explain or understand the Holy Trinity, but then God doesn't ask us to understand. We are saved by God's grace, through faith in Jesus Christ, by the power of the Holy Spirit, not understanding. It is that faith that allows us to be the church, in relationship with God and all people as we are immersed in Baptism in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Amen.

Prayers of Intercession

The prayers are prepared locally for each occasion. The following examples may be adapted or used as appropriate.

Called into unity with one another and the whole creation, let us pray for our shared world.

A brief silence.

God of community, you form us as your church. Guide our bishops, pastors, deacons, and all the baptized in sharing your life-giving good news with all the world. Strengthen us to be bold in our proclamation. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

God of creation, you called everything into being. Sustain this world with your renewing care. Inspire us to see waterways, plant life, birds, fish, insects, and mammals and call them good. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

God of counsel, all authority belongs to you. Encourage the leaders of this and every land to seek peace, equality, and unity. Instill wisdom in advocates who work toward justice in often ignored communities (*like Chief Seattle, whom we commemorate today*). Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

God of care, you created us in your image. Help us see your likeness in one another. Open our eyes to see and attend to all who face oppression and suffering. Console, heal, and nourish all in need (*especially*). Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

God of companionship, you accompany this body of faith. As the rhythms of summer begin, protect all who travel, renew all who will

enjoy a time of sabbath, and shelter all who will not be protected from the sun's heat. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

Here other intercessions may be offered.

God of compassion, you comfort us in our grief with the promise of the resurrection. We give you thanks for the saints of all time and in our lives (*especially*). Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

Receive these prayers, O God, and those too deep for words; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who taught us to pray...

Amen.

Offering Prayer

God of goodness and growth,
all creation is yours,
and your faithfulness is as firm as the heavens.
Water and word, wine and bread:
these are signs of your abundant grace.
Nourish us through these gifts,
that we might proclaim your steadfast love
in our communities and in the world,
through Jesus Christ, our strength and our song.

Amen.

Blessing

Neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers,
nor things present, nor things to come,
nor powers, nor height, nor depth,
nor anything else in all creation,
will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus.
God, the creator, ✝ Jesus, the Christ,
and the Holy Spirit, the comforter,

bless you and keep you in eternal love.

Amen.

Dismissal

Go in peace. Christ is with you.

Thanks be to God.

Upcoming Commemorations

Seattle, chief of the Duwamish Confederacy, died 1866

Sunday, June 7, 2020

Noah Seattle led a coalition of tribes, and convinced them to live peacefully with encroaching white settlers. When he became a Roman Catholic, he held morning and evening prayer with his tribe. The city of Seattle is named for him.