

Trinity Sunday The Gift of God With Us June 7 2020

May the words of my mouth and the meditations of our hearts be pleasing unto You, O Lord, our Rock and our Redeemer. Amen!

God made the world. As creator He gets to make the rules, including the rules that govern our life. As creator, He gets to have expectations of His creation. As Creator, He gets to render judgment. As Creator, He gets to destroy it, rightfully.

But God loves his creation. God intended his creation to be...and it was, very good. The ancients saw creation as an accident or afterthought. The moderns see it as a random, ungoverned process of evolutionary but impersonal "forces."

But God's creation is orderly and well planned. The great problem with current theories of the origins of the universe is not that they are **mechanically** wrong. After all, who was there to be able to evaluate that? The problem is that they claim that we are the result of impersonal, random, accidental processes. Christian theology asserts something **very** different. We are a deliberate act of God, not the result of random processes.

God made His creation good. But we see great evil in the world around us and this has led to the current generation asking hard questions of our theology, especially around the question of evil. But the Bible is clear. God made it good. It is repeated in Genesis 1 too often to be ignored. The current state of affairs is a terrible fall from that goodness. We are not progressing upward, but digressing downward.

Adam and Eve and their progeny knew the Fall. They saw sin, death and the devil enter the world. They were convicted of sin...and they knew it. The penalty of death had first entered their world. They were promised that a Savior would come from their seed.

We know God's love continues with us in Jesus Christ, in His life, suffering, death and resurrection for us. But most folks have never seen, heard, or learned of it. Or they were taught to consider it a fairy tale or worse.

How are they to know the fact of creation, the Fall, the Redemption? How would we convict their hearts so they may receive the gift of a Savior?

Peter saw three thousand conversions that Pentecost day. Is the fact that our churches are full of grey hair and suffering from declining membership, the fact that an entire generation of people have been confirmed in our churches and yet left, is that really our conviction by the Holy Spirit? We are not suffering a problem of the wrong sort of worship or inadequate parking or a poor building. We are suffering from a faith problem!

We know, but are we not pretty blasé about the Resurrection? Do we not yawn sometimes, when we think about the resurrected Christ? Does his resurrection actually affect our lives? Or do we live indistinguishable lives from our neighbors, blending in comfortably to a society that is increasingly going off the rails?

While it is fashionable in our modern world to talk of “finding” God in nature, we really wouldn’t want that kind of a god. God, without Trinity, is not our friend. The God revealed in nature does not reveal His forgiveness. Nature is often powerful, relentless, and unforgiving. Just ask the people of Arkansas, Kansas and Missouri who endured the floods, or the people of California and Australia affected by the fires, or the people of Puerto Rico who have been devastated by hurricanes and earthquakes, ask them about the God one encounters in nature.

God’s nature, the beautiful thing He called “good” repeatedly in Genesis 1, has been thoroughly messed up. It is broken.

There was once a perfect nature, there was once a perfect man who walked this earth. We put Him through a kangaroo court, convicted him under false charges, and killed Him, horribly. He did not stay dead, but was raised to conquer sin, death and the devil. Humanity’s best attempt to be rid of this perfect man failed. Now He is in charge of everything. God has glorified Him, but **we** demonstrated our true allegiance when we tried to kill Him.

God has taken the worst act humanity ever perpetrated, the death of the one innocent man who ever lived, and He turned it into the occasion for sin and death to be defeated for all of us. Christ has not risen to assume the authority to destroy us, but the authority to give us life. He speaks of gifts, not prisons; grace, not punishment.

The incarnation of Christ Jesus, God in the flesh, is God's answer to the broken creation. He did not crumple it up, throw it away and start over; He sent his beloved Son into the flesh to shed his real red blood to fix it. His gift to us

Thus, as God reveals himself to us, He reveals his gracious and kindly face. The same Father Creator whose rules we have transgressed is also the Good Shepherd who dresses our wounds and carries us home. The same God that brought all things into existence is also the Paraclete who calls, gathers, enlightens, sanctifies and keeps us in the one true faith. All three are true God, but in the revelation which is Jesus Christ, we experience the graciousness of God, the gift of his redemption.

But to see how that gift is received, I want you to really focus on the final phrase of the entire book of Matthew. This may be the Gospel for the whole book of Matthew: **Jesus says, "I am with you always, even to the end of the age."**

Now bear with me for a minute as we look at the actual grammar and syntax. Greek is a conjugated language. That means that the pronouns are really unnecessary. When a Greek or Hebrew speaker says "I am" they don't usually use the "I" they just say "am" or "eimi" as it is pronounced. Greek has specific forms for "you are" "he is" "we are" "they are" etc. This was so common in fact that it was honestly unusual for someone to use the personal pronoun "ego" which means "I"

Of course, in the Septuagint, when Moses is at the burning bush and God reveals His name as "I AM" they use the personal pronoun "EGO EIMI"

Jesus uses the unusual "ego eimi" construction here as well, which has given many a theologian and interpreter of the Bible occasion to wonder if He means the Tetragrammaton of the Old Testament. Does Jesus mean **that** "I AM" of the burning bush scene? Most have answered "yes" to that question. I do.

Now things get even better. Because the phrase above says that we should baptize in the name of the Father, Son and Spirit. But the Greek word for "in" also means "into."

The Greek word order in this last phrase is more accurately stated “I with you am always to the end of the age.” Notice “I with you am.” In short, there you are in the middle of God’s name. The Baptismal piece worked, You were baptized “into” the name of God and there you are, right in the middle of “I...AM.”

This is not the only place where this shows up in Matthew. In that most important chapter 18 of Matthew where he discusses forgiveness, in verse 20, the same phrase shows up again. Wherever two or three gather in my name, there I, with them, am. Again, we see the “Ego eimi” phrase with “them” In the middle of it.

In the Image of God, we were made, it tells us in our Old Testament lesson. In Holy Baptism, the Spirit of God enfolds us into the privileged relationship of the Trinity.

Genesis tells us that we are created in God’s image. There are lots of ways we talk about that image of God, but one way is to think of that relationally. The Father, Son, and Spirit are relationally defined. They love – indeed John says that God is love in I John 4:8. To be in the image of God is to be in relationship with Him and one another. Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul and mind, and your neighbor as yourself.

At the end of the great commission in Matthew, Jesus talks about us that way. The name of God is I AM. But when Jesus makes that promise to us that He is with us always, He says, “I with you AM”. The name of God surrounds us. We are right there in the middle of his name. When Jesus said we are baptized into the name of the Father, Son and Spirit, he seems to have meant that quite literally. We are right there in the middle of God’s name!

This enfolding image of God, this relationship of love, is not just an idea, but it is life. Take marriage as an example. The marriage which **thinks** about loving your spouse but never **doing** it is not really yet a marriage. It is better than plotting ways to make the other suffer, but it is not yet really a marriage. Marriage is lived, embodied when we hold each other’s hands, take a walk, talk, and actively love one another in word and deed.

This love with which God has enfolded us, is not a thing to be had and to be put on a shelf. It is a reality which shapes and changes and transforms our lives and every relationship we have. God has, in our Baptisms, put us quite literally into the name of God. He, with us, IS. This makes us new.

God loves his creation. He is saddened by the destruction wrought by sin and has himself done something about this in the incarnation of Jesus. What is more, by incarnating Christ in all of us, by pouring out the Spirit into all of us, by placing us in the midst of Him, He continues to care for this creation through our feeble hands and deeds as we care for our fellow man and the world around us.

Jesus died for the whole of Creation (Colossians 1, John 1, Romans 8, etc.) This means that the blood of Christ, the real, red, created and sticky, blood of Christ, is God, so united with this creation that He restores it to the holiness which it lost and which can come only from Him. We are not called upon to reject this **world**, but the **things** of this world **which are in rebellion** to God. This is why Jesus uses real water to baptize us, real bread and real wine to feed us, and why He continues to work through the real hands and real feet of his created, redeemed, and rescued people.

Rest in those gifts, brothers and sisters. You have been placed in the midst of God's very name, in His presence, by the blood of His Son, and the power of Water and the Holy Spirit. The Gift of the Trinity in Word and Sacrament.

May the love of God and the grace of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit abide in you to life everlasting. Amen!