

Sermon – Matthew 28:16-20; 2 Corinthians 13:11-13
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Grace Lutheran Church
Holy Trinity – Year A
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“Bad Math, Good News”

Sisters and brothers, friends in Christ, grace be unto you and peace this day, in the name of God the Father and our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

1. In the beginning, a void without shape. No light by which to see. Nothing more than a nothing; that’s all there was. Then: a wind. Breath, Spirit, *Ruach* moving over the deeps. In the wake of the wind comes the Word, words spoken by the Creator. *Let there be light*. And just like that, with a bang, God was off and running. A great project of love and life, order emerging out of chaos, step by step, day by day. Not order for the sake of keeping everything in line, in its right place. No, order for the sake of life; life so ordered that it flourishes in a million different directions at once, wild and free, the Creator’s symphony unfolding before our ears. And finally, us. We who bear the *imago dei*, the image of the singular God who speaks in the first-person plural: “Let us make humankind in our image.” So we are made, created, loved into existence by the One God who right away speaks as if this Oneness has a multiplicity to it. The One God who is more than One creates us in order to expand the community of the divine. The God who is love desires more to love. All pointing toward the seventh day, the new day. Sabbath, on which God will rest with God’s people and all manner of things shall be well.
2. Well, you’ve read the sequel and you know how it turns out. The image-bearers storm the castle, so to speak, and the whole thing goes to hell in a handbasket. In today’s edition, we live under what Matthew Skinner of Luther Seminary calls “the weight of COVID-19, white supremacy’s carnage, ballooning unemployment, yawning injustices, and mendacious politics.”

- Indeed. The first seven days of creation went pretty well. But the fall from grace was full and steep. As if the past three months have not provided challenge enough, the last two weeks have been a stark display of all that's gone wrong with creation. Sadly, the damage has been done by us, the image-bearers. The breath was choked from George Floyd. Protests have burst forth, sadly with riotous violence at times, violence symptomatic of the deeper injustices baked into the human experience. If the project of creation is meant to culminate in holy rest, in Sabbath, we have a long way to go.
3. So. Where shall we go? Since God is the God who speaks, we go where the Word calls us. Yesterday, a contingent of Grace members joined 1,300 of our new, closest friends gathered in North Lawndale to help clean up the 24th Ward of Chicago. The years have taken their toll in this community, and so have the weeks. I was part of a crew picking up trash and pulling weeds just north of Harmony. A woman passing by on the sidewalk asked me why I was there. In the moment, I didn't think first of racism or injustice, protests or riots. I simply said, "We're friends with Pastor James Brooks of Harmony Church, right down the block, and he asked us to come. So here we are." I will not pretend that this work was more than it is; I certainly don't share this to affirm how nice it is that some suburban white people went and helped clean up a Black neighbor. I share this because this is how God speaks to us, through one another. The Wind moves, the Word speaks, and we are drawn out of ourselves and into the lives we share together. This is how God uses us to piece the broken creation back together.
 4. We go where we are called. This is how the Triune God mobilizes us. At the close of Matthew's Gospel, immediately before he ascends into heaven, Jesus invites his friends to go: "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. *Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.* This Great Commission issued by Jesus is an invitation to participate in God's work of

- reclaiming creation for God's final Sabbath of rest, peace, completion. The disciples, so afraid just days before, are now filled with the Spirit's authority to do the work of the Son. To go. Not just anywhere, but everywhere. To all nations. To heal the brokenness of creation in the unity of the risen Christ, in whom all people are reunited. In whom the deep divides of this world are overwhelmed with the grace of Jesus and the love of God, resulting in the communion of the Holy Spirit. Grace and love converge to create communion, where Jew and Gentile, Black and white, and everyone else finds a home.
5. We are called. Called not to figure out *how* God is three-in-one but *who* the Three-in-One God is, and *who* this God is calling us to be. Any sermon on Holy Trinity Sunday that tries to decipher the Trinity is bound to founder on the rocks of heresy, even in the best of times. The task is not to fully understand the Trinity, but to confess the Trinity, to live within the Trinity's capacious life, to proclaim the gracious new creation that the Trinity is unfolding. Because only within the Trinity – Father, Son, Holy Spirit – is there room to find the hope we need. To say three is one and one is three isn't very good math, but it is very good news. We worship a God who was a community of love before we came along. We were created to belong, and when we refused, God's Son became one of us. Died for us. Lives for us. The Holy Spirit catches us up into the Triune dance, a perichoretic communion, grace and love drawing us in ever closer into the indwelling relationships eternally held among Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
 6. Creation has a long way to go. We sin. We suffer. The world groans under our weight. But this will not always be. As Stephen Ray, president of Chicago Theological Seminary, says, "Empires created by evil are finite." That is to say, everything that is contrary to, that works against, God's creation will not last forever. Only that which is created by God will endure, only that which is recreated by God will live. The eighth day will come; a new day will dawn. So shall come, the poet Auden writes:

the youngest day when all are
 Shaken awake, facts are facts,
 (And I shall know exactly what happened
 Today between noon and three)
 That we, too, may come to the picnic
 With nothing to hide, join the dance
 As it moves in perichoresis,
 Turns about the abiding tree.¹

7. Yes. Wind moves. Word speaks. God – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit – draws us into God’s very life, which will culminate in the great Sabbath rest of the new creation. We will dance around the cross that has become now the tree of life. God is drawing us in. Black, Brown, white. God is drawing us in. We have a long way to go, but we’ll get there. God won’t have it any other way. In that promise, rest. And then work. Go where God calls you. Consider yourself invited; commissioned to bring this world into the graceful communion of God’s love. Wind moves. The Word speaks. In the end, a new beginning, when God will be all in all. Amen

And now may the peace that passes all human understanding keep your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus, this day and forever. Amen.

¹ From “Horae Canonicae: Compline.”