

Yr. A, Trinity Sunday
June 4, 2023
Preached by the Rev. Furman Buchanan
Christ Episcopal Church
1458 Words

Lessons: Genesis 1:1-2:4a
Psalm 8
2nd Corinthians 13:11-13
Matthew 28:16-20

“In the beginning, when God created the heavens and the earth”...there was only darkness, deep waters, and a sweeping wind. “Let there be light,” God said. And there *was* light...*and*...it was good.

We need to get this story down pat. This first story from our Holy Scriptures—it drives *everything else* that follows. We refer to this story from the first chapter of Genesis as “The Creation Story.” And that is *true*, God’s miraculous creation *is the subject*, but please do not overlook the main point.

One way to tell the main point of a story is to look for the idea...the word...the phrase...that *keeps showing up* again and again.

The main point of this beautiful creation story, I believe, is **goodness**. There was light. And God saw that the light was good! And then there was land and there were seas. And God saw that *this* was good! And then there was vegetation: plants and trees, and lots and lots of seeds...in other words, lots and lots of future potential. And God saw that *these* were good!

Then there was sun and moon, and a breath-taking starry host. And God saw that *that* was good! And then there were sea monsters, yall...and swarms of fish and lobsters, shrimp and scallops, oysters and clams. And that’s not all that happened on ‘Day 5.’ I mean, *look up!* For there were birds of every color, size and shape, flying through the air like magic. And God saw that *it...was...good!*

And then there were living creatures of every kind on the land, cattle and wild beasts, and also the creeping things: reptiles and bugs. And God saw...that even they were good! Before that day was done, God said, “(Just one more thing.) Let us make humankind in our image. And thus, God created them, male and female, AND...God blessed them, female and male.

That is when God saw *everything*, and decided—it was no longer good. *IT...WAS...VERY GOOD!*

Stanza by poetic stanza, this first Bible story *describes* creation, but what it’s *about* is...GOODNESS—the resplendent, heart-swelling beauty, the mind-blowing complexity, the intricately fashioned diversity, the deep, unfathomable, and mysterious GOODNESS of God’s creation.

And every last subatomic *particle of it* has been entrusted to *us...to humankind*. For better or for worse it is ALL...up to us, this massive and yet *fragile*...gift.

And it was God’s idea...*from the beginning*...that people like you and me—created in nothing less than the image of God (that is to say: free, resourceful, creative, generous, trustworthy, loving, *and good*)...*we* are fully capable of being good stewards of this beautiful, massive, fragile *gift*...of God’s creation.

From the beginning, it is a gift of God...for *goodness’ sake*.

“O Lord, when I consider *your heavens*, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars you have set in their courses, what is man that you should be mindful of him?”¹ Thus sang the Psalmist under the glorious night sky of the Palestinian Desert.

¹ From Psalm 8

When I was twenty-one years old, I went camping in the Maasai Mara. I purchased a one-week safari from a guy on a sidewalk in Nairobi, Kenya who spoke good English. He had a small group already organized, and there was room for one more. This was a dream come true for me. I had always wanted to see the big, beautiful animals of Africa in their natural habitat.

Dr. Joe Lesesne, President of Wofford College, gave me the opportunity to conduct a year of independent travel and study in the less economically developed countries of the world. I chose to visit former British colonies, which presented lots of choices...including Kenya, with its “wild animals, cattle, and creeping things of every kind.” Actually, I did not wish to see the creeping things so much—especially not the deadly Black Mamba slithering across the ground.

Welcome to Trinity Sunday! The Church sets aside one Sunday, in particular, for us to celebrate the idea that God is mysteriously perceptible to us in Trinity of Persons—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,...AND...at the same time...our God is completely, perfectly, ONE. We believe that the Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer of all there is, seen and unseen—is one God.

And so, this is the perfect Sunday for us to hear how the Father of all there is, spoke words of *goodness*, in the beginning. It’s the perfect Sunday to remember how the Word of God, Jesus Christ our Lord—God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God—how, *through Him*, all things were made...in the beginning. This is the day we also celebrate the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who swept like a wind from God over the face of the dark, deep waters *in the beginning*, and who sustains life even now...and forever more.

Do you know how sometimes we can be so focused on one wonderful thing, that we can completely miss something at least as important...or maybe even *more important*? It’s easy for us to make this mistake when it comes to thinking about God.

There’s an old clergy joke that goes like this: “God made humankind in God’s image, and we have been returning the favor ever since.” Yall, it is long past time for us to move beyond the image of God as an old, white man with a long, flowing beard, reclining in the clouds.

Well, this is exactly how I was when I had dreamed of seeing the majestic animals of the African continent. I dreamed of riding along the vast savannahs without fences or buildings anywhere, and seeing the elephants up close. And my dream came true. I *did see* elephants and wildebeests. I saw Thompson’s Gazelle, leaping and running...zebras, feeding on the grass, and giraffes, feeding from the trees. I even saw a lonely, endangered rhinoceros keeping to himself.

At sunset, our leader told us to grab our cameras and jump in the van. He drove us an eerily short distance, less than a mile, for sure...where he parked alongside a pride of lions, feasting on a wildebeest they had captured. The hyena patiently waited in the distance, and behind him, a pair of vultures.

This was more than I could’ve asked or imagined of God’s creation, and yet, I had not given so much as a passing thought to the glory that God would reveal to me on that moonless night.

After our campfire was extinguished, and after my eyes adjusted to the absolute darkness of the vast expanse of the Maasai Mara, I saw stars, far more numerous than I had ever seen. I beheld light, arriving from the depth of the cosmos, like never before. I gasped in disbelief at the moment when I stopped looking up, and realized that I could see stars *all the way down* to the horizon.

In other words, this was the moment when I *first experienced* the truth...that the heavens are not above us. The heavens are all *around us*.

I mean, I knew this as a matter of *fact*, from learning the most basic lessons about the solar system. Well, it's one thing to *hear a fact* about the way things are. It's quite another thing to *experience it, firsthand*. It's the difference between something that is *believable*, and something that's *incredible*!

“O Lord, when I consider your heavens, the work of your *fingers*, the moon and the stars you have set in their courses, what is man that you should be mindful of *him*?”²

Dear people, this is our song...a song about the **goodness** of God...infused into creation, and given to us...a beautiful, massive, and fragile gift entrusted to our care.

At least part of the point of the Doctrine of the Trinity is to help us see more of the glory of God, just like I experienced that night in the Maasai Mara.

Maybe the Trinity can shake us loose from our limited idea of the heavens being only above us, and not all around us. Maybe the Trinity can shake us loose from our limited idea of God being only above us, and not all around (and throughout) us. Maybe the Trinity can give us the courage to seek our mysterious God...not simply as a *matter of fact* that is believable, but as a breath-taking *experience of **goodness*** that is *incredible*!

Let us pray: “Gracious and loving God, Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer of all there is, keep us steadfast in this (kind of) faith and worship, and bring us *at last* to see You...in your one and eternal glory, O Father; who with the Son and the Holy Spirit...live and reign, one God, forever and ever.”³ Amen.

² From Psalm 8

³ Adapted from the Collect appointed for Trinity Sunday.