

Trinity
Year A 2017
Gen 1:1-2:4a
Mt 28:16-20

Come Holy Spirit, give life to my words.

In the name of God, creator, redeemer and giver of life.

Amen.

We begin today with the beautiful story of Creation.

Of God's love shown forth in all creation.

God's love poured out in the creation of
all that is, seen and unseen.

The reading from Genesis today,
evidences the care and creativity
exercised in bringing forth all of creation.

God clearly did not rush through
but instead carefully crafted each
specific piece to complement
all other pieces.

A mastery of vision and ingenuity.

It took six days for the entirety
of this awe inspiring act of creation
to be completed.

The ultimate manifestation of God's love
and desire for relationship.

God's vision of the completeness
of all creation complementing each
individual element.

And God, yearning for relationship,
created humankind in God's image.

In the image of God,
the One Holy and Living God created them;
male and female they were created.

And God blessed them.

All of them.

God blessed all humankind at their creation
just as all humankind is blessed
each and every day at the moment of their creation.

At the moment of creation,
each human is created in the image of the loving God.

And all of humankind is created in love,
by the One who is love,
to be loved,
and in the image of love.

Now, God being God,
God could certainly have chosen to do things differently.

God could have chosen
to bless certain parts of creation,
certain animals,
certain humans,
and to not bless others.

But God, we are told,
chose not to do that.

No, God chose to bless all.

God also chose to create humankind
in the image of God.

Now think about this for a minute.

If you just look around you,
there are no two people here
who look exactly the same.

There are no two people in
all of the world who look exactly the same.

There are millions of subtle differences
in the features of each human being.

And all of those differences
display the vastness of God.

Well, that's simply brilliant, isn't it?

Just think about all of the people
you have met in your life,
all of your family members,
all of the people you have ever seen,
and to realize that each person
reveals to all humankind
a specific set of qualities
lovingly created
by a God who longs for relationship.

The God who made us for each other.

Now, when it became clear to God
that humankind was missing this critical point,
God sent Jesus to remind humanity
of the immensity of God's love for all.

The entirety of Jesus' adult life
in this earthly realm
was living evidence of God's love for all humanity.

Jesus' life was a testament
to the reality that all humankind
is created by a loving God in the image of God.

Throughout Scripture,
we see Jesus recognizing the divine in each human.

We see Jesus reminding the outcasts,
the marginalized,
and the oppressors and elite,
that God made all humankind in love and for love.

Jesus reminded his contemporaries
and continues to remind us,
that no one is beyond the love of God.

He continues to compel and command us,
as followers of Jesus,
as disciples,
that we are to show forth God's love to
all whom we encounter.

It's important for us to remember
that Jesus put no caveats
on extending love and respect to all,
even the leper.

Jesus did not sit down with the crowds
of thousands and say,
"I'll conjure up some food for you if you
believe in me."

Instead,
Jesus let the crowds discover how,
working together, all could be fed.

Jesus didn't say to the unclean woman
who tugged on the hem of his robe,
"If you believe in me, I will heal you."

Jesus responded out of love to her cry for help
showing us that we all
can help each other
when we start by recognizing the dignity of every human being.

This brings me to today's Gospel passage from Matthew.

Commonly known as the Great Commission.

It is, unfortunately, regularly cited
in order to defend questionable,
and even unconscionable,
acts under the premise that
Jesus instructed the disciples to
go and convert all those
who did not believe as the disciples did, regardless.

Much harm has been done
in the name of Christianity
based on this misperception
of Jesus' command to the disciples to:

Go therefore and make disciples of all nations,

Jesus' very actions lie in direct opposition to
any notion that coercion or violence
unleashed on any human
in order to assist or compel someone
in coming to believe a particular set of beliefs
identified as "Christian."

God created humankind in God's image.

In the image of God, they were created.

And God blessed them.

And God, realizing that humanity
could not grasp God's desire,
sent Jesus to show humankind
what acknowledging the divine
in each person should look like.

Jesus showed us that we must care
for the widows and orphans of our day.

He showed us that when we pull together
and pool our resources,
God's abundance will provide what is needed.

Jesus showed us that
when we sit at table together, break bread,
look each other in the eye,
listen to each other's stories,
then we are able to recognize the many, many,
images of all who are created in love and blessed.

We live in a time where there is much rhetoric
about who is dangerous,
who is "right" or "wrong,"
who is "less than," and
who is living in ways that someone,
not God or Jesus,
believes is not acceptable to either God or Jesus.

We are told that all people who come from a certain part of the world
are dangerous and need to be prohibited from entering our country,
denying us the new neighbors and friends.

We are told that people who can't achieve
some sort of arbitrary definition of societal usefulness
just need to be forgotten and contained in certain neighborhoods.

Certainly not our neighborhoods.

We are told that people who love certain people
are displeasing to God.

God created humankind in God's image.

In the image of God, they were created.

And God blessed them.

Interestingly, we don't often hear the translation of the Great Commission which reads:

Go therefore and instruct and teach all nations in what I have taught you.

Hmmm.

That rings differently doesn't it?

There is no threat of coercion in that.

There is instead, an invitation.

Just as Jesus invited each of the disciples
He encountered to come alongside him,
to travel with Him,
to see what love made manifest looks like,
He instructs all of us.

Jesus never commanded anyone to believe in Him.

He simply walked, talked,
laughed, cried, listened,
broke bread, and lived out of the knowledge
that God created all humanity in love and for love.

He treated everyone equally,
women, children, men,
lame, ill, outcast.

That my friends is the Great Commission.

Acknowledge the divine in everyone
you meet.

Acknowledge that all humanity is
created in the image of God.

Begin living out of the acknowledgement
that God created all humanity out of love
and for love.

Invite others to walk, talk,
laugh, cry, and eat with you.

Learn their story, share yours.

Embrace God's desire
that there is no in or out;
acceptable, unacceptable;
good or bad.

There is only:

Humankind created by God in God's image.

And God blesses them.....all