

June 11, 2017 – Genesis 1:1-2:4a

The doctrine of the Trinity is a pretty distinctive tenet of Christianity. There's really nothing like it anywhere else in the world. There are polytheists like Hindus and Buddhists. There are monotheists like Muslims and Jews. But to be Trinitarian is to be Christian.

One God in three Persons. For most, it's merely incomprehensible. For some, it's downright offensive. Fundamentalist Muslims, for example, absolutely despise the doctrine of the Trinity. It's considered complete and utter blasphemy to them.

But for most American Christians, it's just taken as a given. Yeah, sure, I believe in the Trinity. It's that whole three leaf clover thing that doesn't actually describe the Trinity at all. But it's what we were all taught in Sunday School. Of course, in reality, describing the Trinity requires a document the length of the Athanasian Creed, that we all said earlier. But we still don't understand it. Nor will we.

And maybe that's why we don't talk about the Trinity any more than we do. We don't get it, so we don't talk about it. We talk about God as a whole. We talk about each person of the Trinity when it's relevant. But talking about Father, Son, and Holy Spirit all acting at once? We shy away from that.

We shouldn't. Because the Bible talks in those terms on several occasions. We heard one such Trinitarian moment in our Gospel lesson. 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.

There are other occasions too. Jesus' baptism in the Jordan. When the Father speaks from heaven. And the Son rises up out of the water. And the Holy Spirit comes down like a dove. It's a Trinitarian moment.

But there's another important Trinitarian moment. And it's the reason for our extremely long Old Testament lesson today. It's the creation of the world. The Trinity in all three persons is present and active at the world's beginning.

*"In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth."* The First Article of the Creed right there in a nutshell in the first verse of the Bible. I believe in God, the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth.

It is God the Father who is our maker. Who takes this uncreated void of darkness and chaos and makes something beautiful from it. Who, like any good Father, makes a home for his children. A home that is full of good things. Light and water and earth and plants and animals. And every other thing that mankind could possibly need. And he doesn't rest until everything is good and perfect and complete.

But the Father is not there alone. Our feeble, human minds may try to pigeonhole the work of creation into one person of the Trinity. But all three are at work during those first seven days.

The Son is there. St John tells us, *"In the beginning was the Word. And the Word was with God and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. All things were made through him."* So where exactly is the Son?

Well, the Son, the Word of God, is right there in verse three: "And God said, 'Let there be light,' and there was light." The very first Word of God to our world.

And all things were made through that Word. God did not think creation into existence. He did not wave creation into existence with his hand. He spoke creation into existence. God spoke, the Word spoke, the Son spoke, and it was so.

And, of course, last but not least, the Holy Spirit is there too. Verse two says that the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters. The Spirit stays there, hovering over creation, until the very end. When he does what is, for us, maybe the most important thing of all.

He breathes life into us. He takes this dust of the earth from which we were made. And the Spirit of God, the breath and wind of God, blows into us. And we are made alive.

The world exists, we exist, because God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit choose to make us. Each person carrying out some vital task. Yet, throughout it all, it's simply God doing it. *"These are the generations of the heavens and the earth when they were created, in the day that the Lord God made the earth and heavens."*

That's what it means to confess God in three persons. The perfect Trinity working in perfect unity towards a perfect creation and a perfect relationship with us. And for a brief moment in time all was very, very good.

Until it wasn't. Because, of course, our perfect relationship with God collapsed when we violated God's Law and did what he had forbidden. And from that broken relationship the perfect creation that God had made became broken with sin and death.

And from that broken relationship and that broken creation, our understanding of the perfect unity of the Trinity was broken as well. Once, long ago, God in three persons walked with Adam in the cool of the day. We viewed God face to face. We had as full an understanding of the Trinity as any human being could or would ever have.

But sin clouded our hearts and our minds. We no longer understood the Trinity. We didn't even understand the existence of God. We invented idols made to look like the creatures of the earth. Made to look like ourselves. Or, worse yet, we said in our hearts, 'There is no God,' and so became utter fools.

We see that confusion all around us. We feel it in our own hearts. We question and we doubt and we wonder... is God really there? What is God really like? Will this evil age ever end?

We're not alone in that confusion. God's people have been asking those questions throughout the history of the world. The Old Testament is one long effort by God to turn the eyes of his children away from doubt and false gods, and toward his loving kindness, goodness, and faithfulness to them.

It's just speculation on my part, but I think that might be why we hear so little about the Trinity in the Old Testament. Oh, sure, you can see evidence of the Trinity at work all through scripture, Old and New Testaments. But it wasn't a particularly well-defined doctrine of the Israelites.

How could it be, when God is just trying to lay a foundation of a relationship with them? Just trying to keep them from sacrificing their own children to Baal and Molech and Asherah. Just trying to give them some semblance of justice and righteousness and mercy in their community.

It's not until the New Testament that the Trinity becomes really evident and really active once again. And that's not coincidence. It's actually really important. Because, you see, just as the the Trinity became so vividly apparent when God was creating the world, the Trinity becomes equally apparent once again when God is recreating the world.

For it is God the Father who desires to make new this home that was ruined by sin and darkness and chaos. It is God the Son, the Word made flesh, who made his dwelling among us. Who came into that which was his own. Not simply to speak light into the darkness. But to be light in our darkness.

And it is God the Holy Spirit, who once again breathes into our frail mortal flesh the breath of life. So that we are no longer simply dust that returns to the ground. But are filled with a new life, a new spirit, that will live forever.

And now we await that new home that the Father has promised us. A world not unlike the one he first made. And yet, so much better. For it will be a world where we have seen God's love poured out on us, through the sacrifice of his Son on the cross. And so it will be a world filled with God's glory. The glory of the only begotten Son of the Father, full of grace and truth.

So know this: having been remade by the Trinity that first made us. Having been recreated, spoken into a new existence, and filled with a new breath of life. God has looked at you and declares that which he declared of the very first creation.

You are very good. And, in Christ, he will always see you that way. Amen.