

## Holy Trinity A

Genesis 1:1-2:4a

Psalms 8

2 Corinthians 13:11-13

Matthew 28:16-2:4a

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RIC Sunday

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Grace and peace from Jesus who loves us.

*In the beginning...* that's how the Bible starts, 3 simple words that are packed with hope, purpose and meaning.

In this Hebrew allegory, God's first actions in shaping Creation are to start separating, defining, painting broad brush strokes of color, black and white, sun and moon, day and night. Before that, Creation was "ex nihilo," nothing existed - and God began making stuff out of nothing. As we listened, now there seems to be no limit to God's imagination or ability to make every conceivable type of life, from viruses and plankton all the way to the great whales and mountains and eventually humankind.

It's a story that tells us how we were planted far down on the ingredient list. We were joined to a world that was already brimming with life and God had room still for us! It's a wonderful story of diversity and inclusion of all of life and a meaningful reminder of God's love for it all. Today, as we take joy in celebrating our welcome and affirmation of all people here at Holy Spirit, especially for the LGBTQ2SIA+ community and people of colour, we find evidence from the beginning of life of God's radical and intentional welcome.

Did you notice the interesting thing that happens in v. 26, where we heard: "*Then God said, 'Let us make humankind in our image...?'*" Did you hear that? We often imagine that God is the original, the beginning, end and middle, but here that a plurality creeps in calling our attention: "Let US make humankind in OUR image..." In this, the very first chapter of the Bible, we learn that God did *not* act alone. God too, is diverse in what we call the Holy Trinity, 3 in 1, 1 in 3: Creator, Christ and Holy Spirit.

Yet, as far back as the story of diversity goes, today's story is very different for LGBTQ2SIA+ people, people of colour and their families. In what I once thought would be an ever growing-in-welcome world, it shocks me to repeatedly see and hear stories of tragedy, violence, and betrayal. We ought to be shocked when we hear such things. With so many messages that tear people down for who they are or whom they love, it is increasingly vital for us to stand up to the attitudes and practices that work against humanity in all its vibrancy. When the welcome of one person or one group or someone in their uniqueness is threatened - do not be fooled - we are all threatened.

As proud as I am of Holy Spirit's welcome and affirmation, it is by far too unique. The church at large has been, and sadly still is, a major influence in stereotyping, erecting barriers and providing ample condemnation, right here in 2023. For that, I am so glad when people find us, when they learn we are for real in our welcome, when they learn they are loved by God, when they feel safe here. Yet, at times, our affirmation isn't enough to unwind years of traumatic theology and messages that inflict harm and pain, damaging and scaring the spirit of beautiful people.

Fights in the church over sexuality are epic. We don't see it here, because Holy Spirit went through all that a long time ago in 1998. But fights continue in the wider church. For all that the church has done and hasn't done I am so sorry. I know it's not simply my apology to make, but it needs to be said over and over until real change happens. If this trauma and pain is part of your story or someone in your family, we pray for healing, we ask for forgiveness and if you allow us, we are here to walk alongside you.

To judge or condemn others is a theological statement. In a sense we are saying, "*hey God, we got this, we don't need you.*" But to sort and divide, separate and judge was never intended to be our work, but God's alone.

As Matthew tells us, it is Jesus who has authority over Creation. We do play an important role! God didn't make us just so that we could stand on the sidelines and spectate! No! This passage from Matthew 28 is called "the Great Commission" and for good reason. We are given holy work to do - to share in spreading the good news of love. We continue to baptize all who would ask, teach the importance of God's place in our lives, and to share a holy meal, but we ought to never put up conditions or barriers.

Martin Luther, our namesake, taught the centrality of Baptism in the Christian life. When we baptize people, we proclaim a welcome in prayer and action. The person being baptized, often a baby, is not required to pass a test or make a payment or even utter a word. We freely pour the water no matter the age, size or colour, IQ, address, genetic profile, shoe size or anything else. The act of baptizing is our way of continuing the work of God's inclusion!

Today as we celebrate Pride and the commitment to affirmation in this community, remember we are participating in God's holy work. We are making a better world and growing in our hearts. The ministry of inclusion isn't something we do for others, but it is also something we do for ourselves.

Thanks be to God! Amen.