

**“And It Was Good...”**  
**Holy Trinity Sunday – June 7, 2020 – Matthew 28:16-20/A**

**Gospel: Matthew 28:16-20**

<sup>16</sup>Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. <sup>17</sup>When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. <sup>18</sup>And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. <sup>19</sup>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, <sup>20</sup>and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

Grace and peace to you from God, the Creator, and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.  
Amen.

**Today is the Feast of The Holy Trinity** – Behind us now are the three great festivals of the Church Year: Christmas, Easter and Pentecost (one for each of person of the Trinity.) We have finished the first half of the liturgical calendar which provides us with the story of the life, ministry, death and Resurrection of Jesus, his return to his Father through Ascension and the pouring out of his Holy Spirit on those who followed him.

Now, it is our turn. The second half of our liturgical year - the long, green Season of Pentecost - focuses on us, the Body of Christ, better known as the Church. So, we pause for a moment today to start our own growing season by pondering the mystery of who God is. But it is impossible to comprehend the incomprehensible; that God is triune - God in three persons: 3 in 1; 1 in 3.

The concept of the Trinity is an attempt to answer the questions raised by people’s incredibly diverse experiences of the same God. The problem is that God, who is perfectly consistent, is also so maddeningly inconsistent! We have all experienced God in various ways throughout our lives. We can point to those times when we have felt God’s powerful presence, and we also remember times when we felt that God was absent.

We also know God through our Holy Scripture; as revealed to us through Jesus, and as we have felt God through the activity and presence of the Holy Spirit with us. Maybe God suspected from the beginning that human beings would want to imagine their own kind of God...so there are myriad images from which to choose: Judge/Shepherd/Advocate - or Father/Son/Spirit - or Creator/Redeemer/Sanctifier, and so many others.

Yet anyone who has experienced God would agree that God IS relationship – that is something we can grasp, because we know about relationships. Reason tells us that relationship is a process, not a product. So, maybe NOT being able to understand God fully is the point. What makes little or no sense to us, makes perfect sense to God. It’s about the relationship. How God knows us, and how we know God.

**Our 1st Lesson** is the first account of the Creation in Genesis (which, by definition means “beginning.”) I encourage you to read it again, either from the bulletin post on Facebook or directly from your Bible in Genesis 1:1-2:4. “In the beginning, when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters. Then God said,

‘Let there be Light!’ and there was light!” For 6 days God created – you know the story – but at the end of each day’s work comes the phrase: And God saw that it was good... (and there was evening and there was morning, Day 1-5.) Over and over and over – it was good. Until Day 6 when all was as God had created it and was indeed *very good*.

Then God invited us into this amazing world, and the garden received its first visitors. Human beings who were “lovely,” simply because God loved them. And it was good. Hold on to *that* thought, “and it was good,” as we launch into a summer of pondering, “how can I grow in faith and trust in this relationship with my Creator?”

This is how followers of Jesus learned to love God, to bring light into darkness and to bind up the broken, and the broken hearted. Our Gospel today includes what is known as *The Great Commission*, about how Jesus sent his followers into the world equipped to do his work. It comes at the very end of the Gospel of Matthew, immediately following Easter morning: the women have come to the tomb, encountered an angel (and the risen Jesus!) who has told them to go and tell the disciples that He is Risen! and to meet him in Galilee. Today’s reading follows: The 11 have done as the women instructed – gone to Galilee, to the mountain Jesus had chosen where they would all be reunited. And when they saw him, they fell to their knees and worshipped him. But – as v. 17 says clearly – some doubted. Even after all they have seen, all they have feared, all they have experienced...even as they worship the Risen Christ – some doubted.

But did you notice, Jesus doesn’t seem to be worried about that at all! He reminds them that he has universal authority to give them their task until he comes at the end of the age. That task forms an underlying Mission Statement for every church’s reason to exist: (my translation from the Greek) “Go, disciple everyone (*panta ‘o ethnos;*) ALL the people from every place in the world. Enfold them in the waters of baptism and in the name of the Trinity, and teach them to observe everything that I have given into your charge. Don’t forget, I AM with you always...forever and ever and ever.” Ok. Now, Go...disciple, baptize, teach...you have the authority of God! But how do we start? What exactly are we to DO? Well, even the disciples found ways to share the gospel – which for us modern Christians has become quite a slippery and unique exercise. Here’s an example from our congregation:

Our Youth Director, Megan, and the middle schoolers have been connecting virtually through the Group Me app. They play games, have conversations, take surveys, share challenges and pictures. But the other day Megan told me she was struggling to define her boundary as a youth director. She wanted to know, what she can and cannot discuss with the youth. What prompted this was their weekly Poll, which revealed that many of them are having a hard time understanding the news (local and national) and the majority said they are struggling and don’t know how to feel. OK, Advent adults. How do we share the gospel truth of just how much God loves them, especially in their times of uncertainty? How can we all open up our relationships and help set a context for them that is consistent with our faith, even when we might be struggling as well? Can we show them God’s loving arms?

We have entered into a fertile time in the past week, a time of Protest – hundreds of thousands of people around the world are protesting police brutality in general and the killing of George Floyd in particular - setting aside their concerns about global pandemics and asking for justice. It may look a lot like protest – but it sounds a lot like prophesy. Prophets, you may recall were those who were set apart and called by God to speak truth to power, a phrase first used by the Quakers and taken up now not only by those who have been oppressed for hundreds of years, but those who stand with them as advocates.

Last Thursday, Pr. Anteneh participated in a Lutheran/Episcopal service of Prayer for Racial Justice. The keynote was delivered by U.S. Congressman, Emmanuel Cleaver. His closing story was about a man who, while walking down the road, came upon a game of Little League baseball. He glanced at the scoreboard. 18-0. Poked his head into the dugout and said to one of the youngsters, "Don't worry, winning isn't everything." The little boy smiled broadly and said, "It's ok, mister, we haven't even been to bat yet!"

Folks all over the United States are coming to bat now – and the church (all y'all) is accepting the mantle of the prophet. Cleaver noted that last weekend, 55% of the protesters in KC were not African American, but European Americans, and he ended by saying, "This is right! If not us, who? If not now, when?"

I know that some of you hearing me today are passionate about all sorts of issues. While you may not think that the Church should speak to social issues, the Bible proclaims a different message. We are called out by God to bring good news to the poor; to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind; to let the oppressed go free and to proclaim the acceptable time of the Lord.

(Just in case you're thinking, "what about the separation of Church and State?" you can rest in the knowledge that the intention of the phrase coined by Thomas Jefferson had always been to keep the state out of the church, not the church and her members out of the public forum.) So, speak to your passions about the ecology, or government, law and order or abortion, partisan politics or the sanctuary movement. Do justice. Love mercy and kindness. And act humbly, as you step up and get involved in the world that God so loves. Find the good news in your passion, and carry that light into the darkness.

Consider the ELCA social statement adopted in 1993 - **Freed in Christ: Race, Ethnicity, and Culture** *expresses the ELCA's calling to celebrate culture and ethnicity. This calling commits the ELCA to confront racism, to engage in public leadership, witness and deliberation on these matters, and to advocate for justice and fairness for all people. The statement is grounded in the conviction that the church has been gathered together in the joyful freedom of the reign of God as announced by and embodied in Jesus. That reign has not come in its fullness, but the message of God's yes to the world breaks down all dividing walls as we live into that promise...*

As we live into that promise...I want to say something to you my friends, dear people of Advent. For those of you who are hearing my words as political – you are correct. These words are not partisan politics, but Bible politics, as I am speaking about the role that Jesus gave to all his followers, while he himself showed us how to live in community. "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength – and your neighbor as yourself."

We are, first and foremost, beloved children of God – and nobody needs to hear good news more than the millions and millions of our brothers and sisters who have been living in the bad news their whole lives. If there is anything that we can do, as a church or as individuals – from any tiny, little thing, all the way to surrendering our very lives (as we know them) so that our neighbors can receive good news – then our discipleship will have been fulfilled. Our Pentecost call to prophesy will have come to fruition. The Gospel Good News of God's love for all Creation will have been shared, and we will have moved one step closer to that day – someday - when we join with Father, Son and Holy Spirit to dance and shout with joy: AND IT WAS GOOD! Indeed, it was very good. Amen.