



## BIBLE STUDIES THAT WORK

**Trinity Sunday (A)**  
**June 7, 2020**

**RCL: Genesis 1:1-2:4a; Psalm 8 or Canticle 13 (or Canticle 2); 2 Corinthians 13:11-13; Matthew 28:16-20**

### **Genesis 1:1-2:4a**

This is the first of the two creation accounts in Genesis. In this account, which comes from what is known as the priestly tradition, God created, God spoke, and God established order from chaos. This order in which God creates is thoughtful, well-planned, and intentional. On each day of creation, God takes time to recognize the goodness in what was created. This creation story presents a divine, cosmic God who not only creates but is in relationship with humanity and all of creation.

God's intentionality and work do not get left in a folder to be found 10 years later; God's love for us is eternal and our relationship with God is personal and ongoing. This particular creation story has been researched for centuries by people trying to understand its historical, literal, and original context. This is all important to understand because this Bible passage contains history: history in the context of understanding more about what it is trying to say, but also history in how it has been used. This God who loves us and created us has been used to justify actions on creation that destroy, exclude, enslave, oppress, and hurt humanity and other living things. Being made in this image and likeness of God reassures us of how much God loves us and wants our company. At the same time, being made in God's image requires responsibility on our end, namely our call to care for all creation. This story of creation is a reminder of how we are so loved by God, and also how our work of caring for the earth must continue.

- In what ways does this creation story reflect your relationship with God?
- Do you know of any ways this story has been used to mistreat others?
- Hearing this creation story today, how do you think our Triune God is calling us today? What are some of our responsibilities to care for God's creation?

### **Psalm 8**

“Who am I, that God would notice me?” These are the words that flow through my head as I read through Psalm 8. Who am I, that this cosmic and powerful God, who so beautifully crafted the world, would notice *me*? Sometimes, God can feel so far away. This distance is created either because of what God is or because of what we feel God is not. It is in this distance God came down as human, so that we can find a humble, loving, and caring creator, who does notice us. It is hard to believe sometimes that God really cares, but even in our doubts, God is present, and we are not left alone. We experience

God's presence in so many different ways; some of us in hope, some of us in nature, some of us in Eucharist, and so much more. This does not stop us from wondering, where God is or how God could notice us; however, it does create space for a relationship with God that is life-giving, open, honest, filled with ups and downs, and transformative.

- Faith is not an easy journey. Have there been times where you have felt distant from God? What brought you close again?
- We believe in a triune God. How do you understand the Trinity in your faith? Is it confusing? Does any of it make sense? Do you relate to one person of the Trinity more than another?

## **2 Corinthians 13:11-13**

This is the end of Paul's second letter to the Corinthians, also called its final exhortation. Paul is writing to the church in Corinth, which, through previous visits and letters, he knew was facing significant challenges – especially around division and community. It comes as no surprise then, that at the end of this letter, Paul reminds them to agree with one another, live in peace, and greet one another with a holy kiss. Through this, the grace of Jesus, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit are with them.

Paul's letters were specific to a time, place, and church. Still, the messages given then are relatable to us today as well. How many of us today are currently dealing with a challenge in our church? I write this as the Church of 2020 deals with a pandemic. While the problems may differ, the reality that the body of Christ struggles is the same. And in the same way, though we are challenged, Paul's call for unity, peace, forgiveness, and love remains crucial. While we may disagree, make-up, change, question, reform, and celebrate, this process of being the Church is not done alone as people in a building. This process of being and becoming the body of Christ is done with the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit. It is through this we are reminded what it means to be church, how God is in the midst of this all, and that the messages of scripture are still relevant to us today.

- Imagine Paul were writing a letter to your congregation. What would that letter include? What would Paul point out as strengths and gifts, and what would Paul point out as things needing to be changed or improved?

## **Matthew 28:16-20**

This passage is found at the end of the Gospel of Matthew and is known as the Great Commission. Here, the risen Jesus appears to his disciples, telling them to, "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, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you." It is pretty clear what Jesus is asking, yet I feel unsettled as I listen to these words. My mind rushes to the different ways religion has and is currently being used to oppress or hurt others. With apprehension, I ponder what Jesus really meant. Did Jesus really want us to go and force his ways on other people? I do not imagine that force is what Jesus had in mind, since it was love that Jesus always preached. However, these are questions still being debated by churches, theologians, and Christians today. How does one make disciples, spread the Good News,

and tell people about Jesus? Or in other words, what is evangelism, and when is it harmful and when is it okay?

A large part of our identity as Christians is exploring how these different aspects of Christian life – baptism, the Bible, Eucharist, worship, and prayer – play out as people who are connected to many other systems. Jesus tells us not to force our ways on other people, but to explore how the ways we live as Christians connect with the other people in our lives. Just as Jesus holds a safe space for those he taught, healed, and prayed for, we ought to allow others to decide whether they want to follow him. While we live out our Baptismal Covenant and explore how that moves beyond church on Sunday, we also can hold space to invite others on the journey. This can be done through praying for a friend in need, volunteering at a homeless shelter, doing something nice for a stranger, or simply checking in on someone we know is alone. These actions we are called to may lead to a conversation about faith and God. They may simply do nothing more than put a smile on a person's face. Either way, the love we are called to is being spread.

- What is speaking to you in this passage?
- Do you think there is a place for evangelism in the modern church?
- Do you have any experiences of going out to proclaim Christ that were healthy and life-giving or negative and unhealthy?

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