

# TRINITY SUNDAY

*Year A*

*This Bible study was written by Melina Dezhbod of Virginia Theological Seminary in 2020.*

## Genesis 1:1-2:4a

<sup>1</sup> When God began to create the heavens and the earth, <sup>2</sup> the earth was complete chaos, and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters. <sup>3</sup> Then God said, “Let there be light,” and there was light. <sup>4</sup> And God saw that the light was good, and God separated the light from the darkness. <sup>5</sup> God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.

<sup>6</sup> And God said, “Let there be a dome in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters.” <sup>7</sup> So God made the dome and separated the waters that were under the dome from the waters that were above the dome. And it was so. <sup>8</sup> God called the dome Sky. And there was evening and there was morning, the second day.

<sup>9</sup> And God said, “Let the waters under the sky be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear.” And it was so. <sup>10</sup> God called the dry land Earth, and the waters that were gathered together he called Seas. And God saw that it was good. <sup>11</sup> Then God said, “Let the earth put forth vegetation: plants yielding seed and fruit trees of every kind on earth that bear fruit with the seed in it.” And it was so. <sup>12</sup> The earth brought forth vegetation: plants yielding seed of every kind and trees of every kind bearing fruit with the seed in it. And God saw that it was good. <sup>13</sup> And there was evening and there was morning, the third day.

<sup>14</sup> And God said, “Let there be lights in the dome of the sky to separate the day from the night, and let them be for signs and for seasons and for days and years, <sup>15</sup> and let them be lights in the dome of the sky to give light upon the earth.” And it was so. <sup>16</sup> God made the two great lights—the greater light to rule the day and the lesser light to rule the night—and the stars. <sup>17</sup> God set them in the dome of the sky to give light upon the earth, <sup>18</sup> to rule over the day and over the night, and to separate the light from the darkness.

And God saw that it was good. <sup>19</sup> And there was evening and there was morning, the fourth day.

<sup>20</sup> And God said, “Let the waters bring forth swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the dome of the sky.” <sup>21</sup> So God created the great sea monsters and every living creature that moves, of every kind, with which the waters swarm and every winged bird of every kind. And God saw that it was good. <sup>22</sup> God blessed them, saying, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth.” <sup>23</sup> And there was evening and there was morning, the fifth day.

<sup>24</sup> And God said, “Let the earth bring forth living creatures of every kind: cattle and creeping things and wild animals of the earth of every kind.” And it was so. <sup>25</sup> God made the wild animals of the earth of every kind and the cattle of every kind and everything that creeps upon the ground of every kind. And God saw that it was good.

<sup>26</sup> Then God said, “Let us make humans in our image, according to our likeness, and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over the cattle and over all the wild animals of the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.”

<sup>27</sup> So God created humans in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.

<sup>28</sup> God blessed them, and God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.” <sup>29</sup> God said, “See, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is upon the face of all the earth and every tree with seed in its fruit; you shall have them for food. <sup>30</sup> And to every beast of the earth and to every bird of the air and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food.” And it was so. <sup>31</sup> God saw everything that

he had made, and indeed, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.

**2** Thus the heavens and the earth were finished and all their multitude. <sup>2</sup> On the sixth day God finished the work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all the work that he had done. <sup>3</sup> So God blessed the seventh day and hallowed it, because on it God rested from all the work that he had done in creation.

<sup>4</sup> These are the generations of the heavens and the earth when they were created.

## Discussion Questions

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?

### Commentary from Melina Dezhbod

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.

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

- 1 O Lord our Governor, \*  
    how exalted is your Name in all the world!
- 2 Out of the mouths of infants and children \*  
    your majesty is praised above the heavens.
- 3 You have set up a stronghold against your  
    adversaries, \*  
    to quell the enemy and the avenger.
- 4 When I consider your heavens, the work of your  
    fingers, \*  
    the moon and the stars you have set in their  
    courses,
- 5 What is man that you should be mindful of him? \*  
    the son of man that you should seek him out?
- 6 You have made him but little lower than the  
    angels; \*  
    you adorn him with glory and honor;
- 7 You give him mastery over the works of your  
    hands; \*  
    you put all things under his feet:
- 8 All sheep and oxen, \*  
    even the wild beasts of the field,
- 9 The birds of the air, the fish of the sea, \*  
    and whatsoever walks in the paths of the sea.
- 10 O Lord our Governor, \*  
    how exalted is your Name in all the world.

## Discussion Questions

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?

### Commentary from Melina Dezhbod

“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.

## 2 Corinthians 13:11-13

<sup>11</sup> Finally, brothers and sisters, farewell. Be restored; listen to my appeal; agree with one another; live in peace; and the God of love and peace will be with you. <sup>12</sup> Greet one another with a holy kiss. All the saints greet you.

<sup>13</sup> The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with all of you.

## Discussion Questions

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?

### Commentary from Melina Dezhbod

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.

## 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 they 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.”

### Discussion Questions

What is speaking to you in this passage?

#### Commentary from Melina Dezhbod

This passage is found at the end of the Gospel of Mathew 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.

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?