

Genesis 1:1-2:4a, Psalm 8, 2 Corinthians 13:11-13, Matthew 28:16-20

INTRO

Well, good morning everyone — I hope & trust that you are all doing well. Thank you for tuning in once again to our weekly message — today is Holy Trinity Sunday, & you'll find that our lessons today reflect this theme of the Trinity.

Our first lesson today is Genesis 1:1-2:4a — it's a very long lesson, the story of the creation of the world, but it's a great story, a foundational story, and it is read on Trinity Sunday because in it you'll find God the Father creating the world, the wind, or Spirit of God sweeping over the face of the waters, and the spoken Word of God bringing creation into being. John explains to us in the NT that the Word — present from creation — takes on flesh, becomes human, & is named Jesus. So, creation is a trinitarian act: God the Father, God the Spirit, and God the Son — the Word spoken which creates the world — all present and active in this chapter.

Then the lectionary makes up for such a long OT lesson by giving us some shorter lessons. Our Psalm today is Psalm 8. The NT lesson is 2 Corinthians 13:11-13, which was written only 20 years or so after Jesus' resurrection, and in which Paul includes a trinitarian benediction, or blessing. So this shows us that the idea of the Trinity wasn't developed 500 years after the NT was written by church theologians, but that the earliest followers of Jesus were already thinking of God in these terms.

And then finally our Gospel text today is Matthew 28:16-20, which is also called the Great Commission — Jesus' call to his followers to make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit — a call to mission & trinitarian baptism. So in these lessons today we see the Trinity at creation, the Trinity in the early church, the Trinity in our baptismal & missional command. I'll encourage you to take the time to pause this recording now if you'd like to, to read these lessons, and then feel free to resume.

HURT

Well, the year 2020 has been one unlike any other we've seen in recent memory — maybe in generations — especially for our American neighbours to the south of us. The year began with the impeachment trial of the American president (in what now seems like ages ago), then onto Covid-19, an economic recession, and now race tensions boiling over throughout many cities. More Americans have now died of Covid-19 than in the Vietnam & Korean wars combined. There's an article in *The New York Times* referring to America as a

tinderbox right now — a powder keg of various layers of tensions stacking up one over the other. Another author writes,

“...we have revisited some of the most traumatic experiences of the past century all in the space of five short months—from the Spanish flu in 1918 to the economic crash of 1929 to race-related killings and urban unrest in 1968 to impeachment in 1974.” —John Kingston (<https://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2020/june-web-only/soul-check-for-white-christians.html>, accessed June 4, 2020)

And in Canada too, we’ve no doubt felt the weight of these issues.

The year 2020 has brought challenge after challenge to our very ability to live together. And we haven’t always stood up to the challenge very well. Evidence of our brokenness as people takes many forms, and none as blatant as last week’s unjust killing of George Floyd by Minneapolis police, coupled with subsequent & opportunistic looting & violence in return.

So what do we do? Well, Martin Luther King said,

“There comes a time when silence is betrayal.” —Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., quoted by John Kingston, <https://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2020/june-web-only/soul-check-for-white-christians.html>, accessed June 4, 2020.

Will followers of Jesus stand up and condemn racial injustice and oppression?

WRONG DESIRES

Christian thinkers throughout the ages, like St. Augustine for example, have often described sin as the result of wrong desires. We are curved in on ourselves, they’ve said, and seek to gratify our own needs and appetites above those of others, which leads to selfishness & narcissism. Remember “the great toilet paper drought” of March, 2020?

This is a point at which Christianity & Buddhism converge. Both Christianity & Buddhism agree that the hurt & pain & suffering in our world is a result of wrongly directed desires. However, Christianity provides a different solution to the hurt caused by our wrong desires than Buddhism does. Christianity says that if we will allow God to redirect our desires through the power of the Holy Spirit to him first and foremost, the power of God can overcome hatred & sin with love. While Buddhism on the other hand says that the path to peace is to eliminate our desires for things that are impermanent altogether.

TRINITY & ETHNICITY

When we read the story of creation in Genesis 1 and 2, we see that humanity is made in the image of God — a trinitarian God who is by very nature creative, relational, communal, and loving. These characteristics are imprinted on each one of us, and it explains why after a

few months of social-isolation we start to go cuckoo. It's the basis for our notion of human rights in the Western world, and also the basis of our value of gender & ethnicity. In the Bible both gender & ethnicity are sacred — they are a part of who God made us to be. Sin causes the division of the nations (see the Tower of Babel story in Genesis 11), but with the redemption of the world, the nations are brought back together again, and ethnicity isn't eliminated, but diversity is instead maintained. For example, when Paul says in Galatians,

“For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus” —Galatians 3:27-28

Now, Paul doesn't mean that there are no more Jews or Gentiles, or that there are no more men and women. He's saying that the division between them is eliminated — that the class hierarchy between men and women, between Jews & Greeks doesn't exist in God's kingdom. And the book of Revelation gives us a vision of heaven in which every nation, tribe, people, and language are represented worshipping God (Revelation 7:9). This is why in the Great Commission, Jesus sends his followers out to every nation — not to make the nations all Jewish, or British, or Canadian, but so that each & every culture of the world will come to worship God in their own language & customs.

LOVING OUR ENEMIES

There's a 2016 documentary called *Accidental Courtesy*, about a middle-aged black musician named Daryl Davis, who has been on a personal mission for 30 years to answer the question, “How can you hate me when you don't even know me?” The film shows story after story of Davis encountering KKK members in the States — slowly, one-on-one, building friendships with them. He listens to them, gets to know them, and allows them to get to know him — the images are staggering. And time after time — not always, and not always right away — klansman after klansman relinquish their robes to him. It's a story of love & friendship truly conquering hatred.

In a sermon that he preached, Martin Luther King said this about loving our enemies:

“It's not only necessary to know how to go about loving your enemies, but also to go down into the question of why we should love our enemies. I think the first reason that we should love our enemies, and I think this was at the very centre of Jesus' thinking, is this: that hate for hate only intensifies the existence of hate and evil in the universe. If I hit you and you hit me and I hit you back and you hit me back and so on, you see, that goes on ad infinitum. It just never ends. Somewhere somebody must have a little sense, and that's the strong person. The strong person is the person who can cut off the chain of hate, the chain of evil. And that is the tragedy of hate, that it doesn't cut it off. It only

intensifies the existence of hate and evil in the universe. Somebody must have religion enough and morality enough to cut it off and inject within the very structure of the universe that strong and powerful element of love.” —Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., “Loving Your Enemies,” Sermon Delivered at Dexter Avenue Baptist Church (quoted by Donavon Riley, <https://www.1517.org/articles/i-would-rather-die-than-hate-you>, accessed June 4, 2020)

Jesus said it this way:

“You have heard that it was said, ‘Love your neighbour and hate your enemy.’ But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be children of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? And if you greet only your own people, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that? Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.” —Matthew 5:43-48

GOSPEL & PROMISE

The remarkable truth of the Christian story is that God loved us while we were still his enemies, consumed with hatred, violence, and indifference or rebellion against him. And he didn’t punish us, but loved us, & sent his Son Jesus to take our sins upon himself, dying & rising again so that we might be redeemed & made his own

The DNA of the Gospel is loving people who hate you, forgiving people who hurt you, praying for people who oppose you, and seeking out those who are different from you. It’s how God saves us, and it’s how he’s called us out in mission to the world around us, so that others might be saved too. We go on mission not sharing some vague, undefined notion of the divine but sharing the Trinitarian God — Father, Son, and Holy Spirit — a relational God of love & creativity. And as we do so, Jesus promises us:

“And I am with you always, to the end of the age” —Matthew 28:20

Have you noticed that your desires are curved in on yourself? That you place yourself above others, maybe even looking down on others as second-class citizens? We all desperately need help redirecting our hearts & desires towards God. And as we continue to confess our sins to him, laying them at his feet, God promises to carry them, to atone for them, and to give us new hearts with affections for him.

So as Paul writes in our NT lesson, receive this Trinitarian benediction:

“The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with all of you.” —2 Corinthians 13:13