

This is Good

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Father, Dad, Daddy, Pop, Poppy, Papa. This Father's Day, lots of names will be shared for men who have given life. Whether a family unit has a father and a mother, or two moms, or one dad, or anything else, in our journey through the seasons, today is a great day to reflect on family and what it means to each of us. In our journey through the liturgical seasons, today is Trinity Sunday, a day to reflect on the many names of God.

You may remember learning about God as Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Or hearing Creator, Redeemer, Sustainer, during baptisms. Even the doxology has a Trinitarian bent – we sing in praise of God from whom all blessings flow, Christ, the word in flesh, born low, and Holy Spirit evermore.

What you may not know is that the concept of the trinity – that God is three persons in one – is not actually a biblical concept. While you won't find the exact term "trinity" in the pages of the Bible, it is a doctrine the church has adopted over time as a way to describe the many names, the many ways, God's presence is known to us, God's people.

Rather than tackle the entire Trinitarian concept today, I'd like to focus on just one way we commonly know and understand God - as God the Creator.

Now I know, that Creation and Creationism have gotten plenty of headlines recently. In fact, Pastor John and I were recently talking about the Creation Museum in Kentucky, and whether or not he might take a trip out there after he moves to see the dioramas of Adam and Eve frolicking with dinosaurs.

At the same time, bitter debates take place in some school districts, over whether to teach Creationism alongside Evolution and the Big Bang theory. And Christians are painted as uneducated, unbending fools.

And the true irony is, Creationism comes out of a simplistic reading of scripture that misses the point of the very writing it attempts to uphold.

The lectionary for today calls us to read the entire first chapter of the book of Genesis. While Pastor John and I didn't want to subject you to 35 verses of

scripture at one time, I do recommend in the week ahead that you return to the text, and re-familiarize yourself with something we all think we know so well.

Re-read Genesis 1:1-2:4 and you just might find some surprises.

Did you know there are two creation stories in the book of Genesis? This first one is actually the newer of the two. It lines out the days of creation in an orderly, repetitive, fashion. This first-day, second-day, third-day delineation is the one so many have tried to perform mental and linguistic gymnastics to square with our modern understanding of the world.

But that was never its original intention. This account was written for a very different purpose.

The text we have here was originally written during the Babylonian exile. A time when the people of Israel were taken from their homelands and brought to a new place. The exiles were told by all those around them that their God, Yahweh, had been defeated by the God of Babylon, which is why they suffered defeat in battle, and their nation was taken captive.

Over time, as the captives lived and grew in their new land, the local religion began to look better and better. Remember, they had come to believe the national God of this region had defeated their local God. Why worship a defeated God instead of a conqueror?

Eventually though, some of the Israelites decided that the story they had been telling, the story of a regional God who created Adam and Eve, the story we find in Genesis 2, wasn't enough. They came to believe that a new story was necessary to address their circumstances, and the beautiful piece of poetry we know as the first chapter of Genesis was created to share a new understanding of God and God's power in our lives.

In this account, God is not a regional God of a particular land, as many neighboring nations understood their deities. Instead, the people of Israel argued, their God was in fact the God of all people and all nations. Their God was the God who created the world with just a word.

While the creation story of Babylon was steeped in violence and chaos, this new story emphasized order, and grace-filled power. It quietly dismantles some of the Babylonian myths – for example, here, the sun and moon are simply lamps in the sky to reflect the light, not gods themselves.

But most radical of all, this new story gave the people hope that their defeat wouldn't last forever. This story explained that God created a place, and then creatures for that place. This story showed that God has a plan, and a purpose. This story gave credence to creativity, and comfort to those who were unsure of the world, and their place in it. This story gave a confident, competent face to the Creator.

And God saw that it was good.

The repeated refrain after each of the "six days" of creation is that each thing was good. This is a God who has created everything and created it in a pleasing way. This is good. This is all good. From daylight's breaking to dusk's shadows falling, to the dark of midnight and beyond. From the sky to the seas, each creature and creeper in between. It's all good.

Other creation stories pitted the people against their gods – placing them in the position of always having to earn their way out of destruction by an angry deity just looking for an excuse to wipe them out. This creation story argues that we are beloved in the eyes of God, along with everyone, and everything that is around us.

What a radical way to look at the world. That each person, each thing that has been created has been proclaimed good. How might it inform our days if we began to live as if each moment were a gift, each interaction a chance to connect with the holy spark of creation within another?

What would it look like to live out a faith that encouraged us to see ourselves as part of something larger, as participants in a world-wide connection between all people and places?

Would we live differently if we truly believed this creation is of God?

Some questions to ponder as we enter a new season together.

Trinity Sunday is a bridge. We have come to the end of Eastertide, marked with the fire of the Holy Spirit. We are now entering into what is known as Ordinary Time. A long season in the church year that will take us all the way to next Advent.

But while this time is called ordinary, it is one of the most nourishing, nurturing seasons of the year. We will dive into the stories of our Hebrew ancestors in the

faith, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph, along with the epistles, Romans, Philippians and Thessalonians, and of course, travel through the gospel of Matthew. It is a season that, in the words of Jan Richardson, “bids us celebrate the commonplace and to seek the God who dwells within the daily.”

As you go into your week, remember the many names of our God. Remember that one of those names is Creator. Your creator, our creator, the creator of the world and all that is in it. God dwells within our daily. No matter how the world was created, we believe, along with our fathers and mothers in the faith, that God created it good.

Amen.