

## **Trinity Sunday: God's Creation**

Rev. Cameron D St. Michael – June 7, 2020

Trinity Sunday

**Readings:** Genesis 1:1-2:4a; Matthew 28:16-20

**Reflection:** Psalm 8

**Music:** Come, Thou Almighty King; Leaning on the Everlasting Arms

**Greeting:** May the grace and peace of our Lord, Jesus Christ, be with you on this day! I pray that as we join together in worship, in whatever way we join together, that we be united by one Spirit, serving the Father, in the truth of the Son. Let us praise all creation. Praise the Lord!

**Music:** Come, Thou Almighty King

1. Come, Thou almighty King,  
Help us Thy Name to sing, help us to praise!  
Father whose love unknown  
all things created own  
Build in our hearts thy throne, Ancient of Days.

2. Come, Thou incarnate Word,  
By heaven and earth adored; our prayer attend!  
Come, and Thy people bless,  
come give Thy Word success,  
Stablish thy righteousness, Saviour and friend.

3. Come, holy Comforter,  
Thy sacred witness bear in this glad hour.  
Thou Who almighty art, now rule in every heart,  
And ne'er from us depart, Spirit of power!

4. To Thee, great One in Three,  
The highest praises be, hence, evermore.  
Thy sovereign majesty may we in glory see,  
And to eternity love and adore!

**Prayer:** Everlasting God:

You have revealed yourself as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and ever live and reign in the perfect unity of love. Grant that we may always hold firmly and joyfully to this faith, and, living in praise of your divine majesty, may finally be one in you; who are three persons in one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

## Reflection: Psalm 8

*To the leader: according to The Gittith. A Psalm of David.*

*O Lord, our Sovereign, how majestic is your name in all the earth! You have set your glory above the heavens. Out of the mouths of babes and infants you have founded a bulwark because of your foes, to silence the enemy and the avenger. When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars that you have established; what are human beings that you are mindful of them, mortals that you care for them? Yet you have made them a little lower than God, and crowned them with glory and honor. You have given them dominion over the works of your hands; you have put all things under their feet, all sheep and oxen, and also the beasts of the field, the birds of the air, and the fish of the sea, whatever passes along the paths of the seas. O Lord, our Sovereign, how majestic is your name in all the earth! (Psalm 8 NRSV\*)*

We read the words of Psalm 8 and we see God's creation. There is praise and wonder at all that God has made. Especially for humankind, being crowned with glory and honor. God's name is declared to be majestic. What in creation makes you think of God? What works are you most thankful for? How do you praise God for creation? For your creation? In what ways do you honor God's majesty?

**Prayer:** Holy God, you have given us grace, by the confession of the faith of your holy church, to acknowledge the mystery of the eternal Trinity and, in the power of your divine majesty, to worship the Unity. Keep us steadfast in this faith and worship, and bring us at last to see in your eternal glory One God, now and forever. Amen.

Now let the words of our mouths, and the meditations of our hearts be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, our Rock and our Redeemer. Amen.

## Sermon:

Our scripture readings for today come from the Common English Bible. Our first reading for today comes from the book of Genesis, chapter 1, verse 1 through chapter 2, verse 4a.

*When God began to create the heavens and the earth— the earth was without shape or form, it was dark over the deep sea, and God's wind swept over the waters— God said, "Let there be light." And so light appeared. God saw how good the light was. God separated the light from the darkness. God named the light Day and the darkness Night. There was evening and there was morning: the first day. God said, "Let there be a dome in the middle of the waters to separate the waters from each other." God made the dome and separated the waters under the dome from the waters above the dome. And it happened in that way. God named the dome Sky. There was evening and there was morning: the second day. God said, "Let the waters under the sky come together into one place so that the dry land can appear." And that's what happened. God named the dry land Earth, and he named the gathered waters Seas. God saw how good it was. God said, "Let the earth grow plant*

*life: plants yielding seeds and fruit trees bearing fruit with seeds inside it, each according to its kind throughout the earth.” And that’s what happened. The earth produced plant life: plants yielding seeds, each according to its kind, and trees bearing fruit with seeds inside it, each according to its kind. God saw how good it was. There was evening and there was morning: the third day. God said, “Let there be lights in the dome of the sky to separate the day from the night. They will mark events, sacred seasons, days, and years. They will be lights in the dome of the sky to shine on the earth.” And that’s what happened. God made the stars and two great lights: the larger light to rule over the day and the smaller light to rule over the night. God put them in the dome of the sky to shine on the earth, to rule over the day and over the night, and to separate the light from the darkness. God saw how good it was. There was evening and there was morning: the fourth day. God said, “Let the waters swarm with living things, and let birds fly above the earth up in the dome of the sky.” God created the great sea animals and all the tiny living things that swarm in the waters, each according to its kind, and all the winged birds, each according to its kind. God saw how good it was. Then God blessed them: “Be fertile and multiply and fill the waters in the seas, and let the birds multiply on the earth.” There was evening and there was morning: the fifth day. God said, “Let the earth produce every kind of living thing: livestock, crawling things, and wildlife.” And that’s what happened. God made every kind of wildlife, every kind of livestock, and every kind of creature that crawls on the ground. God saw how good it was. Then God said, “Let us make humanity in our image to resemble us so that they may take charge of the fish of the sea, the birds in the sky, the livestock, all the earth, and all the crawling things on earth.” God created humanity in God’s own image, in the divine image God created them, male and female God created them. God blessed them and said to them, “Be fertile and multiply; fill the earth and master it. Take charge of the fish of the sea, the birds in the sky, and everything crawling on the ground.” Then God said, “I now give to you all the plants on the earth that yield seeds and all the trees whose fruit produces its seeds within it. These will be your food. To all wildlife, to all the birds in the sky, and to everything crawling on the ground—to everything that breathes—I give all the green grasses for food.” And that’s what happened. God saw everything he had made: it was supremely good. There was evening and there was morning: the sixth day. The heavens and the earth and all who live in them were completed. On the sixth day God completed all the work that he had done, and on the seventh day God rested from all the work that he had done. God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it God rested from all the work of creation. This is the account of the heavens and the earth when they were created. (Genesis 1:1-2:4a CEB+)*

Our second reading for today comes from the Gospel of Matthew, chapter 28, verses 16-20.

*Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus told them to go. When they saw him, they worshipped him, but some doubted. Jesus came near and spoke to them, “I’ve received all authority in heaven and on earth. Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to obey everything that I’ve commanded you. Look, I myself will be with you every day until the end of this present age.” (Matthew 28:16-20 CEB+)*

This is the word of God for the people of God. Thanks be to God.

So, the first thing one might notice from the readings today is that it may not sound like the familiar version of the creation narrative that you've heard before. That was a very conscious decision on my part to use the more conversational Common English Bible. Part of this is because it makes us stop and think about the words differently, and I wanted that to be part of how we read it today. In conjunction with that, we have our Gospel lesson from Matthew. At first glance one might not make the connection between the two, that is my purpose today. When Jesus says "I've received all authority in heaven and on earth. Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to obey everything that I've commanded you," we recall what all of that authority entails. So we recall the creation story. It is rather poetic to listen to. We have everything being created and God seeing how good it was. And all the divisions that we know and we understand play out in this first creation narrative from Genesis 1. I started to think about what all of this means together. That, if Christ carries all the authority of heaven and earth, and he sends us to go and make disciples, teaching what he taught. It carries with it a tremendous weight, a tremendous responsibility, and yet a tremendous joy.

One of the things that we have in the account is the creation of humanity. "God created humanity in God's own image, in the divine image God created them, male and female God created them." That thought, that thing that binds us all together as one, being created together in God's own divine image. Now, that can be a lot to take in, and it is always a source of debate over what that means, so I figured I would give you a little bit of my perspective. Being created in God's image, the image of that which is good, the image of that which is holy, that which is caring, is a tremendous gift. It doesn't say that God created some better than others. It doesn't say God created one over the other, but that God made humanity in God's image. Then we are given the earth. "Be fertile and multiply; fill the earth and master it. Take charge of the fish of the sea, the birds in the sky, and everything crawling on the ground.' Then God said, 'I now give to you all the plants on the earth that yield seeds and all the trees whose fruit produces its seeds within it. These will be your food. To all wildlife, to all the birds in the sky, and to everything crawling on the ground—to everything that breathes—I give all the green grasses for food.'" All the wildlife, the trees, the plants, everything. And we get something a little bit different. God saw everything he had made, and now he doesn't see how good it is, but it was *supremely good*. I had to pause on that idea of supremely good. That we are the caretakers, that we are given basically everything. Look after it, care for it.

But there is an interesting contrast to be made. That in the commissioning of the disciples in Matthew, the care has expanded. It has gone beyond here's the birds, and here's the beasts, here's the plants, here's the trees, here's the "things" one might say, that make up the earth. Now it is making disciples, not of one nation but of all nations, baptizing in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. That humanity as a whole is now called to look after humanity. And we are given encouragement in this. "Look, I myself will be with you every day until the end of this present age." In other words, you're never in this alone. And maybe it's just

because of the current situation, where I feel a little more distant from a lot of humanity these days, that it seemed to be a supremely good comfort. That this monumental task isn't one that we ever carry out without support.

As I was reading through these, I began to think about that means to care for each other and to be stewards of all of God's creation, each other included. That we nurture each other, that we help each other, that we correct each other. That we don't do it for our own sake. We don't try to prove someone wrong so that we can be right. We don't correct others so that someone will take notice of our own cleverness. We do it as an act of loving stewardship. If we think about the care of others with the same care that God had in all of creation, it gives us a great example of how to care. I think that when Christ draws out baptizing in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, it causes us to reflect upon what each of those means to us. We often think about God the Father as the creator. As the one that brought everything into being. That we look around and we see that work still going on today. That we see the trees, and we see the plants, and we see the animals, and we see the people. And we see that work that God called supremely good. We think about the Holy Spirit, a Spirit that would be delivered to all who would receive it. A Spirit that would guide us in truth. A Spirit that would give us the strength and the ability to communicate when we think there is no way to communicate. A Spirit that gives us a voice. A Spirit that is there to give us guidance. We think about the Son, whose love and compassion reminds us to have love and compassion. He reminds us that one of the greatest things one can do is to be ready to lay one's life down for another. And all three draw, together, a picture of what it means to care. A picture of what it means to take responsibility for those things. That it doesn't mean just observing nature and going "well it's here" but it means noticing it and noting that we are to be taking care of God's creation. That when something is amiss, we have a voice to speak up for God's creation. That in times of trouble, we show compassion, mercy, and love to God's creation. And thinking about those different aspects of God helps us to focus in on each different way that we care. And that we do it together. I'm reminded that if Christ was with one disciple and Christ was with another disciple all of their days, then they were united in Christ. United in the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. I think that care and compassion is important. It can be hard. It can be testing. We all know that in trying to do the caring and compassionate thing in caring for others that we have distanced ourselves from each other to do the best we can to help all the people that we can. Even at the cost of giving up some of the things that we love. And that is not easy. Especially when it creates a conflicted feeling in our hearts. Between the things we want to do and the responsibility we have been given.

One might note the difficulty in going and making disciples if we aren't to go within six feet of each other. That was not lost on me in today's reading. But then I think about all the ways we do communicate, and we do show our compassion and care. We use our time and our energies in the ways we can. In many ways, not being in contact with others is a sign of our discipleship. Doing what we can to lessen the effects of a pandemic is showing compassion in

care. By the same token, standing up and speaking for others is a sign of our compassion. We live in interesting times. A time where communication is instant. We can pick up the phone and check in on each other, just as if we are in the same room. That I can see my parent's faces even when they are miles away. That I can talk to my family and talk to you. Even what I'm saying now, you can see it or hear it, watching a video, listening to a podcast, or reading a page, my voice reaches you. I'm given a great comfort that whatever trials we face and what difficulties we have, Christ will be with us through it all. Every day and every moment. If it seems like the entirety of the world is too much to handle, that it wasn't just forced upon us without thought. It was given to us by a God that is still with us. A God that will always be with us no matter where we are. No matter how far we feel we stray, God is with us. Wherever we go, we are in God's creation and are God's creation. If we are created in the image of God, then God is with us, because we are made in that supremely good image. It also means we can find the good in others. I know how hard that can be right now.

It is something I know we all can struggle with. Sometimes it is easier to look at someone else's faults and write them off. Sometimes it seems if we are calling out a wrong or an injustice, if we are speaking up to something negative that's happened, it can feel like we are focusing on the negative. But at the same time, it is also the responsible thing to do. No one can right a wrong they don't know is wrong. Nobody can correct a mistake they don't know they've made. The question is how we do it compassionately and in a caring manner. It isn't always easy, and we may have to ask for forgiveness for reacting too harshly. I know I do. I know in the midst of discussion and argument I remember to pray for others. Because they are in my care. If they accept that or not is their own business, but all I can do is what I've been sent to do. To carry out God's mission. Look after this world and look after each other and remember God in it all. That if the Holy Spirit moves you to speak for justice, it also means explaining to others why we seek justice. That others understand why we care. That others understand why our hearts are so moved for whatever issue it may be. I know for a fact that I likely disagree with every single person that hear my words today, on some issue or another. We may disagree on how important those issues are. It also means we must have a spirit of understanding. That Christ on the cross forgave the people who were crucifying him. Because they didn't know what they were doing. That needs to be our prayer too. Asking forgiveness for others for what they may not understand while we seek to understand others. It is in that spirit of compassion and understanding that we find God. It is in overcoming our differences that we find truth. It is in conquering the evils and injustices that we see that we truly bring all people together. It is understanding that each of us has a different view based on the life we have lived and the events that have molded us. It is especially important to remember that some issues run so deep we may never see eye to eye. Does that mean we will always be apart? No. John Wesley had some words of wisdom about disagreement. Think and let think. If we remember that you and I are made in God's image, that every person we see is a creation made in the divine image, it can help us remember humility. Now, it doesn't mean we let bad things happen simply because we disagree, but it means that we do what we can to understand each other.

We remember that we may think differently, but that if we are both made in God's image there must be something we can meet upon. We find common ground that one of the biggest things we have as common ground is God. Will others always accept that? No. We see it time and again, throughout the Bible, that people disagree. We see it in Moses and Pharaoh, an argument where they couldn't see eye to eye. But Moses didn't relent because he knew the lives of others were at stake. But we can also see Paul in disagreement with the church in Jerusalem, able to find a way to move forward together. It's important to remember these things because tempers can run high. Things can happen we disagree with, but we must ask if the issues that divide us divide us at a core level. And I come back to creation. At the heart of it all is something God saw as good.

So my message for you today is to find that good and be that good. As we go forth to make disciples, let us not simply say to others "believe as I believe" but show others what that means. If the care of humanity is in you, you will care for your brothers and your sisters, not because they agree with you but because they deserve care and compassion. That we forgive others, not so it looks good on us, but forgive to show that all can be forgiven. That we show mercy because we are a people who need mercy. A people who have received mercy. That if Christ died to set us free, we must show what that freedom means. We must show what compassion means. That we live out our mission. Not simply by speaking what the Bible says but living by what Christ has called us to do. Others should know the Bible by the way that we live it. That is how we show our care for God's creation. By honoring it in every action that we have. By everything we say and do. Seeking forgiveness when tempers run high. Seeking to build bridges we may have torn down in anger. Seeking to repair relationships that are broken, be they relationships between us and others, or repairing relationships solely between others, to show that our concern is not simply for things that happen in our lives, but things that happen in all creation. We carry out our mission by carrying out all that God has called us to do. Remember all that God has done. Carrying with us that it is good and that we can make things be good. That we have been given everything we need to do the work that must be done. So go and do. Go and be. Go and show the world kindness, compassion, mercy, and love, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

**Prayer of Confession and Pardon:** Lord, forgive us we pray. We come before you as those who have sinned against you in what we say and do. We come before you as those who have sinned against you in what we do not say and what we do not do. It is in our doings and our failings that we seek your grace and your mercy. We haven't loved you how we should. We haven't loved each other how we should. We are a people who are sorry, who humbly seek your forgiveness. Help us to live with one another in your mercy and your grace. Let us always remember the sacrifice made by our Risen Savior, Jesus Christ, that we may understand your deep love for us. May we honor that love by sharing it with one another, loving as you love and caring as you care. Help us to be of one body redeemed by one blood, serving one God. Amen.

**Offering:** If you are so moved to make an offering, you may send it to the church treasurer, or you may send it to the PO Box listed in the weekly update. If you are interested in online giving, please contact me. We are still the church, and the church still needs your support to keep doing all the important work that we do.

## Lord's Prayer

### Music: Leaning on the Everlasting Arms

1. What a fellowship, what a joy divine,  
Leaning on the everlasting arms;  
What a blessedness, what a peace is mine,  
Leaning on the everlasting arms.

Leaning, leaning, safe and secure from all alarms;  
Leaning, leaning, leaning on the everlasting arms.

2. O how sweet to walk in this pilgrim way,  
Leaning on the everlasting arms;  
O how bright the path grows from day to day,  
Leaning on the everlasting arms.

Leaning, leaning, safe and secure from all alarms;  
Leaning, leaning, leaning on the everlasting arms.

3. What have I to dread, what have I to fear,  
Leaning on the everlasting arms;  
I have blessed peace with my Lord so near,  
Leaning on the everlasting arms.

Leaning, leaning, safe and secure from all alarms;  
Leaning, leaning, leaning on the everlasting arms.

**Dismissal with Blessing:** We go forth now that we may be ministers of the good news wherever we go. The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Until we meet again. **Amen.**



**Prayer List**

Rev Charliam Renner	Bishop Frank Beard	Our Conference	Our Healthcare Workers
John & Angie Veach	Diane Washburn	Bill Calvert	Eric Veach
Cathy Devall	Brock McMorris	Ed & Verna Titus	Hayden Kanizer
Henry Catey	Jake Kiser	Laura Eubank Allison	Nancy Sowers
Dave Yaw	Aaron Carrell	Cindy Cisney	Patti Corder & Crew
Joyce Sly	Nancy Hoke	John Millsap	Larry Sidwell
Don Wells	Tricia Adkins	Ty Bradley	Ronnie & Elaine Carlen
Pat Nebel	Don Stewart	Earlene Shupe	Brenda Hurt
Sharon Button	Anne Winkler Heinrichs	Family of Jerry Jackson	Family of Tom Jester
Corine Howard's daughter Marcia			

Richard Durham	Kathy Hanks	Nora Werner & Family	Wayne & Charlotte Carrell
Gary & Mary Winterrowd	Lois Woolever	Mary White	Nick Nichols
Family of Novella Claiborn			

Greg Williams	Eloise Buffenmeyer	Martha Roberts	Charlie & Charlotte Baxter
Paul Schulte	Lyle Whitley	Tammy Fischer and Children	

Offerings may be mailed to your local treasurer or addressed to:

Rev Camron D St. Michael

PO Box 54, Charleston IL, 61920

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## **6/7/2020 Update from Pastor Cameron**

Greetings! Time for a weekly update!

I've had two of the three meetings I need to have before I begin to make any announcements about returning to the church building. Because of this, I will wait until after Monday to post a separate update about that for each church. This way I will have met with each group before I make any announcements here. We can have small groups meet again, as long as attendance is recorded, and the group is 10 or less. That includes Bible study and Sunday School. Please let me know if you are interested.

In preparation for returning to worship, we do need to begin getting the church ready. In the close future, this would mean cleaning the church building. Looking at current trends, we will likely move into Phase 4 of the IGRC plan, which will give us a greater number of people that can be in the church building at once. We can begin to prepare the building by marking off seating. That will be dealt with on a church by church basis. If you are interested in helping, please let me know.

Annual Conference is an online only event on Saturday August 15<sup>th</sup>. Please contact me for more information. General Conference is going to be next year, and I will have more information about that later.

There are copies of the Upper Room available in Greenup in the box and at Cottonwood. You can also find the current issue online. The new Sunday school quarterly is also in the box for whoever is interested.

I am still looking for pictures and music to share in services. I'm happy to share prayer requests, video, or anything you would like to share. If you would like to use the church to record music for service, please contact me so that I can give the best guidance I can for both social distancing and recording format. I have enjoyed some of the recent music we have had for the Greenup Facebook page!

Phase 3 in the Restore Illinois plan is underway. We must be aware that we could move into Phase 4 as early as the end of the month, but it could take much longer depending on the number of new cases and the amount of testing done. Hopefully, we will continue to see a decline in new cases and an increase in testing and tracing.

I will be continuing to have our worship services online and in print! It is on YouTube and a link can be found on my website as listed below. I am also posting the information on the church Facebook pages. If there is anything you would like to contribute, let me know! There will also be printed materials available at the churches to pick up. Please feel free to contact me for more information. If anyone is interested in doing music for any upcoming service, please let me know. There are many options for doing this. I can also share readings or any other video that you'd like to make part of the service. Participation is welcome! If anyone you know is not

getting a copy and would like one mailed, please let me know. I am trying to get them mailed out weekly.

Also, in this time we are still working to keep the bills paid, our missions supported, our apportionments met, and our outreach working. As such, we do need your continued financial support as part of the church. Offerings may be sent to your local treasurer or to the PO Box listed below. I can also arrange to pick them up if I am delivering anything to you. I am personally grateful for all your continued support in this difficult time. I cannot stress enough that the church is still active and we are still together.

Please see the CDC website for information on the Coronavirus. If you do go out, please follow all distancing guidelines, and if you can, cover your face. Please let others know, and together we will all see this through safely. This is a very real and very serious pandemic. Please do not share false information about it. It only works to undermine the people doing the dangerous work of trying to keep us all safe. If you have any questions, I am happy to answer them or direct you to a source that can.

Please stay safe. You are all in my prayers. I will keep you updated as best I can. If you have any questions, feel free to contact your Church Council Chair or myself.

Rev. Cameron D St.Michael

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