

Today is Trinity Sunday, the one Sunday of the year when we focus on the Holy Trinity: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.

The lessons appointed to be read on Trinity Sunday always deal with the Holy Trinity. That's why our Epistle from 2 Corinthians ended this way:

"The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with all of you."

Definitely sounds like the Trinity to me. Our Gospel lesson is even more explicit: At the end of Matthew, Jesus sends his disciples out to baptize "in name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit."

OK. It's hard to get much clearer than that.

But do you remember what our first reading was? It was from the Old Testament. It was from the beginning of Genesis. It was from the beginning of the Bible. And this is the reading I want to focus on this morning.

I want to focus on Genesis 1 because it seems at first to be a very unlikely place to encounter the Holy Trinity. After all, Genesis 1 is the beginning of Hebrew scripture. And there is nothing more offensive to a good Jew than the idea of God being Trinity. First of all God is one, they say. "Hear, O Israel," they pray every day... "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one." Or another way of translating it is, "Hear, O Israel, the Lord is God, the Lord alone."

Plus for a good Jew, the thought that this God would become a human being is something they firmly reject. So Genesis seems a strange place to find the Trinity.

And yet, in Genesis ch1, the Holy Trinity puts in an appearance. Right off the bat. At the beginning of the first book of the Torah, the holiest 5 books in Hebrew scripture, we meet a Trinitarian God. In the beginning, God is revealed to be Trinitarian. So this morning I want to zero in on Genesis 1.

Let's start with the first 3 verses of Genesis:

"In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters. Then God said, 'Let there be light'; and there was light."

Did you catch it? Father, Son, and Holy Spirit right there in those 3 verses. Plain as day, right? Well OK, it is a bit more subtle. We need to dig a little bit to see it.

Back to verse 2: "The earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters."

The Hebrew for "wind from God" is "ruah Elohim." Elohim is one of the two big names for God. And ruah means "wind." But it also has another meaning. Ruah also means "spirit." Ruah Elohim is the Spirit of God, or the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit is the way that God is immanently present with Creation. That's true today. And that was true from the very beginning. When creation was still a formless void, the Holy Spirit was present. From the beginning of scripture, we begin to see the Holy Spirit as a distinct part of God's being. We see the beginnings of a Trinitarian understanding of God. We see the beginnings of at least 2 persons of the Trinity. The creator God, God the Father is called the first person of the Trinity. God the Holy Spirit is termed the third person of the trinity. But what about the 2nd person? Well, it turns out, he's there in v3:

"Then God said, 'Let there be light'; and there was light."

Did you catch it? The other person of the Trinity? It's there, but it's also subtle. It's tied up in the words, "God said."

Every other creation story of every other culture in the world has something in common. In every other creation story, the world is created by the gods doing something. Somehow, in every other culture, something is done.

The Egyptians had a cosmic egg that was broken into two parts. That's why the sky looks like a dome—it's the inside of an eggshell. The Babylonians talked about a battle between the gods and the monsters of chaos, and when the monsters were defeated, the gods took their bones and fashioned the earth. The Greeks had similar stories when their gods defeated the Titans. In the Norse creation story, the sky is made out of the skull of a giant. In all these accounts, the gods are hands on in fashioning creation.

But not in Genesis 1. In Genesis 1, God simply speaks, and it happens. How does God create the universe? By speaking. God said, "Let there be light." And there was light. God said, "Let the earth bring forth creatures." And there were animals of every kind.

Over and over are the words "God said." And then something happens in response to those words.

How does God create the world? God speaks the word, and it happens.

OK, I want to hit pause for a moment and make a tangential comment. At first I was tempted to preach on Genesis 1 and talk about creation and evolution. I have no problem in accepting both—they're not mutually exclusive. But I decided not to preach that kind of a sermon today. I did a pretty heavy sermon a few weeks back on the relationship between science and faith.

But I do want to note that wonderful refrain. God gives commands. And creation responds. God is not hands on in Genesis 1. Instead he commands his creation to do things. Creation itself is commanded to bring forth life. God sets creation up in such a way that it

participates in the continuing act of creation. To me this is very compatible with modern scientific ideas like the big bang and the evolution of species. God says, "Let there be light." And light is produced. God says, "Let the earth bring forth creatures." And creatures arise.

Now think about it. How do you make things happen? Only two choices. You either do something. Or you say something.

Any animal can make things happen by doing something. But only a rational human being can make things happen by speaking words. Children learn it early on.

Babies start out by only going "Waa." But cries of "Waa" soon turn into words. "Dat (I would like that very much)." "Wawa (Please give me something to drink)." "Poo (Would you be so kind as to change my diaper at your earliest convenience?)." Children learn that words make things happen.

Think about it this way. You think of something up here in your head. How do you communicate that? How do you get people to know what you're thinking? How do you get people to do what you want? With words. Words are ways of taking abstract thoughts and making them concrete, either by writing them or speaking them.

Our words get things done. Our words have power. But how much more so with God?

God's words are the way he gets things done. But there's more to it. Scripture talks not just about God's words, little w, but also God's Word, capital W. The Word, capital W, is the way that God, capital G gets things done.

But there is a difference between our words and God's Word. Our words are things separate from ourselves. But in scripture, THE Word, capital W, is a part of God's very being. The Word is an aspect of God's nature.

In John's gospel, John makes a big point of this.
"In the beginning was the Word. The Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him (through the Word), and without him not one thing came into being."¹

And if you have any doubts about who this Word is, John makes it clear a few verses later:

"The Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth."²

In other words, The Word was not only the way the world was created. The Word also became one of us in a human being, in Jesus Christ.

¹ Jn 1:1-3

² Jn 1:14

So the Trinity is right there in the first 3 verses of Genesis:

In the beginning, God created.

The Spirit of God was intimately present with creation.

And God created by speaking, God created by his Word, capital W.

Now, you might be thinking, "Well, that's an interesting philosophical and biblical discussion. But what does it have to do with me?" Actually everything. And to see that, let's go back to the first chapter of Genesis.

Toward the end of our reading, in v26 and 27 it says, "Then God said, 'Let us make humankind 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.' So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them."

Notice the beginning of v26, God says, "Let us make humankind in our image."

We have God, singular, and we have the pronoun "us," plural, referring to the same thing. God, both singular and plural, all at the same time. God is not using the "royal we." God is not telling the angels to help him out in creating human beings. God has been running a solo show so far. God doesn't need angels or elves or little helpers to do his work. God commands creation itself. And things happen.

But the pronoun is plural. For millennia, Christians have seen this as a pointer to God as Trinity. God refers to himself not as me, but as us.

God says, "Let us make humankind in our image."

And the next verse says, "So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them."

What does this mean for us? Everything. We are created in God's image. And what is that image? We could take several sermons to talk about that. But one important piece of that image is that God is a God of relationship. God is not a just a "me." God is also an "us." God is a relationship. At heart, God is a mutually loving, self-sustaining relationship within himself.

And we are created in God's image. We are created to be in relationship. In relationship with each other, sure. But more importantly, in relationship with God. At the center of God's being is relationship. And God wants us to share in that divine relationship.

God invites you to share in the beautiful relationship between Father, Son, and Spirit. Enter into that relationship. Become a part of that loving relationship. Enter into that relationship of perfect love between the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Jesus prayed for those who would believe in him: "As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us."

God is a relationship. And God wants relationship with you. God invites us all to share in the loving relationship that is at the core of God's very nature.

God brought all things into being. God fills with his being all things.

Open yourself to share in his being.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.