

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

Below are the readings and sermon for Sunday August 23, 2020. I hope they have reached you in good health and the Spirit of our Lord.

In Christ's Peace,

Pastor Steve

Genesis 1:1-5

Six Days of Creation and the Sabbath

¹In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, ²the 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. ³Then God said, 'Let there be light'; and there was light. ⁴And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. ⁵God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.

Matthew 6:30-34

³⁰But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you—you of little faith? ³¹Therefore do not worry, saying, "What will we eat?" or "What will we drink?" or "What will we wear?" ³²For it is the Gentiles who strive for all these things; and indeed your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. ³³But strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.

³⁴ 'So do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring worries of its own. Today's trouble is enough for today.

Sermon

I remember ice fishing with a couple of upperclassmen while in seminary. It was my first ice-fishing experience. While fishing for farm-raised rainbow trout in this man-made lake we got to talking about faith stuff. At some point I decided to interject my understanding of the Trinity, The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. I am not sure how much sense I made in explaining the Trinity, what is ultimately unexplainable, and what I believe to be a core tenet to the mysteries of our faith, but I did say one thing that drew my upperclassmen fisherman buddies discerning attention. I said, "The Holy Spirit is my favorite part of the Trinity. It is my favorite." Their immediate correcting response was something to the effect of, "Dude, you can't have a favorite. They are equals. Inseparable. Unified. One in the same. No hierarchy. Of the same divine essence. Don't separate them. If

you do, you don't get the complete picture of who and what The Triune God is." In my defense I had not taken systematic theology yet. The class that systematically studies the nuts and bolts of our faith, the class in which we spent a whole semester dissecting and analyzing The Nicene Creed. Their point was well taken. I learned a bit more than how to ice-fish that cold January day.

Starting today and the next two Sundays we are going to examine each person, not part of the Trinity. Each week we confess the Apostles Creed as being foundational to our understanding of how God relates too and between us and us to God. The word *creed* comes from the Latin word *credo*, meaning *I believe*. A statement that begins with I believe is meant to give order to a purpose.

Not unlike a mission statement, it gives us a way to order our thinking so that we can piece the overall picture together. In the case of the Apostles Creed we are communally making a brief statement that summarizes the entirety of God's creating and missional action too, and in this world.

We begin with, *I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth...* Where else would we start than in Genesis. *In the beginning...* Hebrew language scholarship suggests that these three words are translated as, *When God **began** to create the heaven and the earth*. Approaching these first words of our sacred text in this manner one might be lead to be understand that God made a decision to create. As in, God might have been static prior to the moment that the formless void began to take shape. Had gone created elsewhere already? Had God been resting and then decided to begin project earth? These are questions we can ask, but cannot answer. In other words, *In the beginning when God created*, suggests that the beginning of everything, possibly even God, was the act of creating the heavens and the earth. Whereas, *When God began to create*, opens the door up to the possibility that God preexisted the beginning and arrived at this moment and then decided to begin the process of creating the heavens and the earth.

If, we understand God as "deciding" to create something out of nothing then does that not say something of the character of God? God could have passed over the formless void and then, well, nothing. But God did not move along. Instead, God's Spirit got to creating.

So God created light, and it was good. And God made sure it was separate from the darkness. Now, God did not create the darkness. It was already present. God created the light, and now because of the light the darkness stands out.

What lies beyond the beginning of everything we know will be known to us. *When?* I believe in our earthly end the answers to big questions will be revealed. In the meantime, we are gifted the narrative of our heaven and earth beginning at the whim of what we call God, and saw to it that the beginning was indeed good. Swirling gases, dust particles, carbon, all a formless void in darkness and then God, light and above all goodness. To believe in God is to submit to the understanding that we know why there is good.

To believe in the Father almighty, is to encounter God as being relational. It wasn't enough that God created the heavens and earth from on high. There was to be more, and it was to be in the form of God coming to earth. God's character now moves from not just creating goodness, but in creating beings in God's image. God created all that is, for good,

and chose to create humanity in his own image, for good. *Why?* Because God wanted us to be able to identify with him. God wanted us to know that we are of him. For goodness sake, God created us from the same swirling dust of the cosmos that God formed the heavens and the earth. We too are created to create good.

Now God is named father for a simple reason. The biblical record is largely written by men, and thus the almighty is presented to us as male figure. Being a Father figure also lends our image of God as being a disciplinarian, one to whom we should be obedient. Kind of like, *"You may freely eat of every tree of the garden; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat..."* And we know how that went! Freewill paved the way for the fall of humanity. Ever since, God the Father Almighty has been working at creating and forging good relationships between us that point to his unmistakable presence among us. God's guiding presence did not end with Adam and Eve's disobedience. God's presence did not end with the great flood. It did not end with Sarah's inability to conceive. It did not end with enslavement in Egypt. It did not end at the Red Sea's shores. God's presence did not end after 40 years in the wilderness. Nor did it end at the walls of Jericho. God would come to Samuel, to anoint David, to defeat Goliath, and become King. As God's people were exiled from their promised land by war, God remained present in care and hope through the likes of the prophets Zephaniah, Jeremiah, Obadiah, Habakkuk, Ezekiel. Throughout the biblical narrative God's good character of creating a way forward for the saint as well as the sinner is well documented. God is good all the time! And all the time...God is good!

God may not always interject or permit life to unfold as we would want or desire, but always does as God wills it to. Not unlike how our limited human minds wrestle with what was in the beginning. How and why did all this come to be? Divine design or swirling soup of cosmic dusts and gases that coalesced into the universe?

Or, is that in and of itself the work of a being that began to create, made sure that it was good, and has ever since sought to create, and preserve good amongst us? How does one behold the physical beauty of mother earth; the intricacies of her ecosystems from the dome above to the waters below. How does one explain our perfect positioning in relation to the sun and the moon to sustain life, an absolute celestial necessity and not at least approach belief?

Our Creator God cares. Beyond the sun, moon and stars and into your life today God the Father gives you His Word. His Word was made flesh so that we can be transformed into something good. Like a formless void that hears let there be light the Word of God dwelled among us connecting us to God and one another; connecting us to trust in God as the source of our lives, the source of all our healing, and the source of our forgiveness. Children of God, what more could we need?

The Word of Life once said...*if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you—you of little faith? Therefore do not worry, saying, "What will we eat?" or "What will we drink?" or "What will we wear?" ...indeed your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as*

well. 'So do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring worries of its own. Today's trouble is enough for today.

In Martin Luther's Large Catechism to say, "I believe in God the Father" is to say, "I hold and believe that I am a creature of God; that is, that God has given and constantly sustains my body, soul and life."

I pray that whatever is heavy upon your heart this morning will be lightened and enlightened by the assurance that God the Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth is on the job. Whatever has you fit to be tied, full of anxiety, worried or in pain, let it be known that the God that created the enormity of the heavens and earth works to create good for and in you. Just like creation, we are good works of the Triune God. Always under repair. Sometimes out of touch, but never out of reach. We are held together by the love of God's in Jesus Christ, the Word of God. Our alpha and omega, beginning and end amen. Believe that. Amen.