

## **Sermon – Trinity Sunday (Year A)**

*Scripture Texts: Genesis 1:1-2:4a; Psalm 8; 2 Corinthians 13:11-13; Matthew 28:16-20*  
*Sermon preached at Gloria Dei (Old Swedes') Episcopal Church*

**Focus Statement:** *On this Trinity Sunday, we are reminded that we are made in the image of the God whose nature is love, as revealed in science and scripture.*

Loving God: May my spoken words be faithful to your written Word, and lead us all to better know the living WORD, Jesus Christ our Lord.

### **Outline:**

1. Evolution vs Creation?
  - a. I wish I could go back and apologize to my high school biology teacher!
    - i. Raised in conservative churches during the culture wars, I was taught that evolution was a godless theory that stood in opposition to the Bible.
    - ii. I argued with my poor teacher and wrote polemical notes when given assignments that touched on evolution.
    - iii. I thought that was what I had to do as a faithful Christian.
  - b. Of course, that is not the only option for a faithful Christian!
    - i. There are a multitude of faith Christians who have gone into the sciences, even evolutionary science. They recognize that science can speak to us about God's beauty and creativity and care for creation just as much as Scripture.
    - ii. Even Augustine, the great theologian of the early church, recognized in the 4<sup>th</sup> century that the Genesis creation myth was poetry and mythology – and was not meant to be taken as literal fact.
    - iii. The creation myth was how an ancient civilization explored the question "Why are we here?", but it is not meant to override discoveries like the fossil record and carbon dating.
  - c. But, then, what do we learn from this creation myth?
2. God created the heavens and earth – and it was good!
  - a. This myth isn't really seeking to answer the "how" of creation. Rather, it is exploring the why, and what it means for us creatures.
    - i. Even a plain reading can reveal some truth to us.
    - ii. Creation is beautiful and good, and God made it to be that way. Even in the moments of hardship and catastrophe, beauty shines through.
    - iii. We are called to care for God's creation, and to reflect God's love and care throughout the world.
  - b. Going deeper – why was this myth written?
    - i. Compare to the *Enuma Elish*, the Babylonian creation myth (for the biblical account seems to have been written during the Babylonian captivity).
    - ii. Striking similarities: out of the waters of chaos and the creation of a firmament / dome
    - iii. Even more striking differences: the battle between Marduk and Tiamat, the conquest and creation from slain foes, the creation of humans as slaves.

3. The God who wants to be known
  - a. Genesis begins to reveal a different kind of God
    - i. God creates out of love
    - ii. God wants to be known, and creates us for relationship
    - iii. Created in God's image, we are meant to reflect God's goodness, creativity, and love to the creation we are entrusted to care for.
  - b. Cooperative Evolution
    - i. You might reasonably ask whether evolution still challenges this portrayal of God – with its ruthless competition and survival of the fittest. Sure, God might guide genetic mutations, but why make it all so bloody??
    - ii. I discovered with wonder some of the more recent work done in evolutionary science – work that recognizes cooperation as another mechanism of evolution.
    - iii. In this bringing of order out of chaos, the ability of creatures to choose cooperation over strict competition drives things forward powerfully!
  - c. God as Trinity, and our call to reflect that divine unity in diversity.
    - i. And that is what finally brings us to the doctrine of the Trinity.
    - ii. This doctrine is not meant to be understood scientifically or mathematically – we get into trouble when we try to explain it too precisely
    - iii. It emerged out of the early churches experience of God as creator, and as Jesus, and as Holy Spirit. But even when we are invited into relationship with God, we have to remember that God will be beyond our full comprehension.
    - iv. The point of this doctrine is not to fully understand God, but to recognize that love and cooperation are more than just pretty ideas. They are more even than mechanisms of evolution and creation. They are fundamental realities that are embodied in the very nature of the God who is three and is one.
  - d. May we know ourselves to be creatures lovingly made in the image of this God. May we live in awe and wonder, drawing on both scripture and science. And may we choose love and cooperation, that we may reflect our creator through our own unity in diversity.

***Amen.***

### **Notes**

- Mechanisms of evolution: mutation, natural selection, survival of the fittest...and cooperation?
  - Competition is seen as a fundamental, driving force of reality. And, to some extent, it is.
  - But, the good news of Trinity Sunday is that there is a deeper and richer reality of love.
- The creation myth of Genesis 1 is notable for how it counters the Babylonian creation myth.
  - This text was likely written during or after the Babylonian captivity – and it shows some striking similarities to the *Enuma Elish*.
  - Both involve bringing order out of chaos, begin with a cosmic ocean, and see the construction of a dome shaped firmament to hold back the waters.
  - However, in the *Enuma Elish*, the god Marduk fights and triumphs over other gods, building creation from their corpses and blood. Humans are then created to serve the gods.

- In contrast, there is no conflict in the Genesis account. Rather, we hear emphasized over and over that creation is good! And, humans are created not to serve god, but to be image bearers and to care for creation.

-