

The transcript comes from the recording of the sermon. It may contain transcription errors.

We come again today to the Trinity — to the mystery of God that is embodied for one Sunday in our worship.

Now, you are not going to find the word "trinity" in any of our scriptures. If you read the earliest church writings, you will not find the word trinity there either. In fact, it takes about seventy to eighty years after the death of Christ — once all of the books we now know as the New Testament are already in circulation — that people begin to think about God as a Trinity.

It was Ignatius of Antioch who first used language that we would probably call Trinitarian language. And not long after that, Justin Martyr begins to formulate what we now know as the doctrine of the Trinity. It is a doctrine that invites us into the very heart of the mystery of God. I like to imagine the Trinity as just barely scratching the surface of the nature of the divine.

So let me give you the classical doctrine of the Trinity, which states that there is one God who exists eternally as three distinct persons: the Creator, the Redeemer, and the Sustainer — or, if you use our most traditional language, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. These three persons are co-equal, co-eternal, and share the same divine essence.

And while you will not find this doctrine in our scripture or in the writings of the early church, that does not mean that the folks who discerned it were coming in blind. They were reading things like Matthew 28 — we heard that read a moment ago — which contains that Trinitarian formulation. They read that and began to think: What does this mean about the nature of God? What does it mean that we are being sent in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit?

And they were reading things like Genesis. They were reading those early accounts of how life came to be, how everything was formed by God. They read that and they saw words like "we" and "us" used to describe the nature of God, and they began to wonder: Why is God a "we" and not an "I"? Why "us" when speaking of the one God?

So they encountered this seeming contradiction and began discerning how God is one-in-three and three-in-one. And you have these words of Jesus that imply that God is greater than we had previously understood — words that force us to stretch our imaginations, to stretch our understanding of the very nature of God.

The reading from Genesis may have sounded a little strange to some of you who have grown up hearing it in other translations. I chose Robert Alter's translation of Genesis this morning because it preserves some of the more poetic aspects of the Hebrew language that often get lost in other translations.

Most of the time when we try to translate scripture, we are trying to do either something that literally translates word for word, or at least translates an idea for an idea. But

Robert Alter decided to create something more literary — to try to mirror the beauty of the Hebrew language.

The words of Genesis 1 invite us to hear the story of creation not as prose and not as poetry, but as something strange and in between. Not strictly a literal retelling of things and not quite a song, but something in the middle. They are words that invite us to something that is strange yet beautiful, powerful yet inviting at the same time.

So I want you to really listen to some of the beauty that is recorded in these words. Listen to things like: "the earth was welter and waste and darkness over the deep and God's breath hovered over the water." Isn't that a beautiful image? The breath of God — hovering.

"Let there be lights in the vault of the heavens that divide day from night. Let us make a human in our image, by our likeness, to hold sway over the fish of the sea and the fowl of the heavens and the cattle and the wild beasts and all the crawling things upon the earth."

And hear also those repeated phrases that come again and again. We know in the Hebrew language that when a phrase is repeated over and over, that is an invitation to lean in and listen closely. I was struck this week, reading this passage again, by how many times the phrase "And so it was" appears. And so it was. God's voice speaks. God's breath moves. And so it was.

And that phrase — "and God saw that it was good" — how many times does that repeat itself in our story, inviting us to lean in and think: What does it mean when God speaks and declares something good?

And then maybe we do hear those repeated words — "we" and "us" — used to describe God. Those words that invite us to expand our image of God. To understand that the love of God spills past the singular and becomes a "we" kind of thing. As if the singular word cannot contain the love of God. It just spills over and becomes a "we" thing.

This is our story. We are drawn into this story, invited to feel that same weight of God's breath hovering over the chaos of our lives. We are invited to feel the weight of God's breath singing to us in the wild places of our lives — turning something that is welter and waste and darkness into something that is good. Very good, at that.

This is the story of creation. It is the story of God being poured out. And you know, God is still being poured out. This isn't something that God did a long time ago and then stopped doing. God is still being poured out even to this very day — poured out into our stories, poured out into our chaos, poured out into our wildness, being poured out into our lives, our church, our neighborhood, and our world.

It is also the story of that breath of God — that Holy Spirit — inviting us to let God be poured out through our work, our ministry, our striving for justice and mercy and righteousness. When we hear this story, we do not receive it passively. This is our invitation to pour the love of God out from our lives as well.

You see, Trinity is not really a doctrine. We call it the doctrine of the Trinity, but I think that does it a real disservice. Trinity at its core is our reminder that the very nature of God — the very essence of what God is — is collaborative, inviting, and unifying. It is that God who is poured out into our lives and who invites us to have that same spirit of collaboration, inviting us into that same unifying spirit.

For if God's nature is partnership — if the very makeup of what God is, is partnership — what does that teach us about how God calls us to be as beloved children of God? If God exists as a partnership, maybe we should too. Maybe we should have that same spirit of unification that is the essence of the nature of God.

The second scripture that was shared with us, we call the Great Commission: Go into the world, make disciples, baptize in the name of God. The Great Commission. But maybe — maybe, maybe — instead we think of that as the Great Invitation. That we are invited to go into the world, to go into creation, so that we can co-create with God. To go to serve as we have been served. To go and build the kingdom of God that keeps challenging and standing up to all the kingdoms of this world.

God sends us. Us. God doesn't send me. God doesn't send you. God sends us. That partnership "us." God sends us to hover over the welter and wild world. To hover over the chaos that keeps entering our story, the chaos that keeps showing up in our lives. We are invited to hover over it, to embody the living presence of God in the chaos of this world.

So I want you to imagine with me — get those prophetic imaginations working this morning. Imagine the places we might go. Imagine the places we might hover. Imagine the places where we might pour out the love of God.

We are celebrating 37 years of Reconciling Ministries at our church today. And I wonder — in a time when so many of the hard-won rights of the LGBTQIA+ community are under more and more threat — where are we being called in this day and age, in 2026? Where are we being called to partner with God? Where are we being called to create something beautiful? Where are we being called to envision something just? Where are we being called to build the kingdom of God?

For the last few months, we have been working to reshape how this church cares for creation. We have been trying to move away from having a green team and trying to make this a congregational effort to care for our creation. So I wonder — in the work of caring for creation — where are we being called to go? Where are we, in the year 2026, being called to partner with God to create something beautiful? Where are we being called to envision something just? Where are we being called to build the kingdom of God?

In the last year, this church has been prophetically dreaming — I would say — about how we might challenge a community that has left so many abandoned, so many uncared for, so many unhoused. And I think we need to keep wondering and imagining where we are being called to partner with God to create something beautiful, to create a vision for something just, and to build the kingdom of God.

But there's a long way to go, isn't there? There's a long way to go because the chaos keeps pressing in. The wildness, the waste keeps pressing on us. The darkness keeps pushing into our lives. We know neighbors who are hungry. We know neighbors who are sleeping on the streets tonight. We know neighbors who are caught up in the middle of addiction that they cannot fight by themselves anymore. We know neighbors who are afraid to live and love authentically. We know neighbors who are being choked by pollution. We know neighbors who are being ravaged by war.

You see, partnering with God never lets us rest on our laurels. It never lets us have success and say, "Oh, we're done. We finished the work. Let's stop now. Everything is well." Partnering with God means being invited constantly into this partnership with that which is holy, so that we can continue to learn to extend the love of God — the love that hovers over the chaos.

Let's be a hovering kind of church. I like that word. I like it because it seems to imply that it's going to take some effort. I don't think I could just hover without effort. It makes it seem like something I actually have to think about doing. Let's be a hovering church that moves over the waters, the chaos, the welter and waste, the darkness. Let's hover over them and continue to pour out the love of God.

Let's pour out a love that leaves no one behind. Let's pour out a love that calls no one unworthy. Let's pour out a love that says there is nothing that can make us incompatible with the love of God. Let us pour out the love that is always inviting us to find new, amazing, and beautiful ways to share the love of the divine — the love of the triune God — with our neighbors in Christ.

Let's be the hovering church that pours out love as love has been poured out upon us.

Friends, I'm going to invite us into a moment of prayer.

Most Holy One —

You hovered over the chaos so long ago. You hovered over darkness. And then, with a voice that must have sounded like song, you sang goodness into being.

Let us hear that voice today — in the cry of a child, in the rustling of a leaf, in the song of your people and the hope for all the world. Let us hear your song hovering over us, pouring abundant love into our lives.

In Christ I pray. Amen.