



Lakeside Sermons

Lakeside Baptist Church • Rocky Mount, North Carolina
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JUNE 11, 2017
TRINITY SUNDAY

God's Unquenchable Desire for Love
Genesis 1:1-2:4a; Matthew 28:16-20

From time to time when we call our family in Slovakia, we catch everyone up and awake and energetic. And every once in a while as we chat via FaceTime, we will just sit and watch our granddaughters Savannah and Holly as they play. Almost three years old, Savannah is quick on her feet and darts all over her room to grab whatever toys catch her eye at the moment. One minute she is driving her car to a hockey game and, before you know it, she and her stuffed dog Salty are off on an adventure on the high seas. Holly, not yet walking at ten months old, grabs whatever is within reach, examines it, then crawls off to find something else of interest. One day last week, we received a picture of Holly at their play kitchen, “making pizza” for supper, standing on the open oven door so she could reach the top of the stove. Imagination is never in short supply when little ones begin to play. It is a joy to watch.

Most of the time I read the story of creation from Genesis, Chapter One, and I imagine God making grand gestures and speaking each element of creation into existence with a resonant, theatrical voice. Every once in a while, however, I wonder if God was feeling a bit playful that morning when he got up and decided he was going to have a really fun day. “Let’s make a world!” he exclaimed to the heavenly hosts around him who probably rolled their eyes as they wondered what in heaven’s name God was going to do this time.

He had been trying to decide what to do with this one area that was a big stretch of nothing. It was basically empty space, without any form at all, except for the waters which God blew on, causing ripples and waves. But it was so dark that nothing could be seen. His voice trembling with excitement, God said, “Let there be light!” Light appeared and pushed the darkness of to one side, so God named the light “day” and the darkness “night.” Tired and excited, God called it a day—the first day, and was very pleased.

Over the next few days, God was like a child at play. God created the sky to separate the waters above and below. God collected the waters below to expose the dry land and caused grasses and shrubs, vegetables and fruits,

flowers and forests to grow there. God put lights in the dome of the sky, a sun for daytime and the moon and stars for the night. He had a ball making all of the sea creatures, animals to roam the land, and birds to soar into the sky. God was happy at the end of every day.

God was overjoyed with the world he had created, but something was missing. He had no one to share this world with him. The heavenly hosts were okay, but they pretty much praised God night and day and, well, that got a bit old at times. God wanted to share his world with a creature who could enjoy it as much as he did and make use of all the neat things that he had included in it. After wandering around and thinking about it for a while, God decided to make what he called “humans.” They would be similar to God with a mind, a heart, and the ability to do things in the world. God got busy once again choosing this and that from the earth, mixing it together, and molding it into a special form. Then he leaned over and with the first kiss of affection, breathed life into it. Humanity was born and God was delighted—and tired! God took the next day off and rested because he sensed that now humans were in the world, he would not be getting much rest for a long, long time.

Our world and everything in it, our bodies, the blood which pulses through them, and the very air that we breathe, were dreamed up and formed by an imaginative, creative, and loving God. But it was not enough. God wanted to know these humans, to have a relationship with them, and to love them. So God thought up the name of “Parent” and considered all of the humans who inhabited this garden we call earth to be his children.

We humans felt awe and love and gratitude and sometimes fear toward God whom we started to call “Father.” Because we are all children and some of us become parents, we had some understanding of who God as our Heavenly Parent must be. Unfortunately, because no one could see God and only a few people reported to have heard God, there developed an understanding that God our Heavenly Father was distant and removed from our ordinary lives. We felt like God our Father reacted when we misbehaved, but there were no understanding arms when we felt alone. When we poured out our hearts in prayer, silence, as deep and empty as the world before creation, pressed down upon us. And we began to do all sorts of things in God’s name that God had nothing whatsoever to do with. There was a relationship gap that threatened all that God had happily created.

So God had another childlike, creative, ridiculous idea—God would become a human so that God could better understand us and we could see

and hear and touch God. And God was so excited about his idea that he sent angels to announce the news beforehand and an entire chorus of angels to herald his birth as a baby when he arrived. In Jesus, God poured out all of the love that he had been unable to share for ages before. Jesus talked about who God really is and what God really wants from us. He alleviated suffering and brought wholeness back to many a body and soul. He loved people no one else would give the time of day and he chastised the people who claimed to act in his name but who knew very little about his name which meant love. God in Christ learned a lot about us and did his best to help us learn more about him. Sadly, the best way he could think to show how deep and vibrant his love for us is involved his death but, thankfully, his resurrection as well. People responded, they understood, they fell in love with God who shared life with them.

Knowing that he could not remain in human form for eternity, God faced a another dilemma: how could this new relationship continue and grow and not become distant again? Once more, God's imagination went to work and God remembered that initial breath over the dark and empty waters that first stirred creation to life. He thought of that kiss that breathed life into his precious children. Once more, he breathed his Spirit and it rushed over his believers like a fire of blessing. He spoke and reassured them that they would never be alone but that he would remain with them in Spirit. So the wild, impetuous, creative, play of God brought the world to life, and us with it, and continues to sustain and enliven us every day.

Perhaps it is one of the gifts of God, but we humans like to organize and categorize and label things so we know where they fit into our world. Followers like ourselves, who thought a lot about the ways God has tried to relate to us over time, recognized that God had claimed us first as his children, then came to live among us our brother. Finally, God in Christ settled among us—within us—as the Holy Spirit. It was a trinity of personalities, a trinity of revelations, and the doctrine of the Triune Nature of God was itself born.

Scripture nowhere uses the term “Trinity” to describe God. It is a human description of our experience of God. In a few places, God is described in these three ways as when John writes about Jesus being the Living Word which was active in creation as the breath of God which spoke the world into being. Matthew clearly identifies the three personalities of God at the conclusion of his Gospel when Jesus offers his final instructions to his disciples before returning to heaven. He said:

"All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

Matthew 28:18-20

As he stood with his dearest friends, God in Christ told them—and us—to go and play in the world. “Do what I have done: imagine, create, enjoy, love. Be to one another what I am to you—a loving parent, a caring companion, and a steadfast support—through all of life. And remember, I am always with you.” He offered a trinity of ways to know God loves and cares for us. He offered us a trinity of ways to know and love one another.

Scholars, theologians, and skeptics have written lengthy volumes about the doctrine of the Trinity, explaining, defending, and even debunking the theory. What we need to know is this: God created us out of love, came to us to show us true love, and remains with us to experience love. Our calling is to love one another until we all understand and rejoice in God’s love for us. That is not merely child’s play. It is the salvation of the world! Amen.

June 11, 2017

Prayer of Thanksgiving and Intercession

How blessed we are that you created this world and all that is in it but were not satisfied until you fashioned something like yourself whom you could love and could love you in return. How grateful we are that we are those creatures that you lovingly formed with your own hands and brought to life through the breath of your Spirit. We praise you Father, Son, and Spirit, for loving us enough to give us life.

You have filled this world with good things, and we are thankful. You have provided for our every need and, when our needs have changed, you have enabled us to think and dream and create new gifts and opportunities for our world. We thank you for sharing your creative powers with us and for guiding us to use them in good and productive ways.

We know that we do not always do good things with the life you have given us, and we are sorry, O God. We do not always understand why we reach for things that are not ours or venture into dark alleys where we have no business going. We know you want us to live in the light, but we sometimes choose the darkness and cause pain and suffering when we do. Forgive us, O God, and help us to listen to your Spirit whisper how we might best live the life you have given us.

We pray for one another and for friends who are hurting today. Whether by illness or tragic event, by fault or by folly, bring help to us all, we pray. We seek healing and wholeness which can come only from your loving-kindness, O God. Speak the word, we pray, and bring life once again to our lives.

We ask your blessing on Amy as she seeks growth and rest this summer. We pray for her safe travel, for opportunities to learn and to expand her gifts, and for stillness which will allow her to listen for the whisper of your Spirit. Bring her back safely to us, we pray, that we might be blessed by all that she gains.

Be with us all, O God, and enable us to sense you close by. Open our hearts to your love, our minds to your guidance, and lives to your grace, through Jesus Christ our Lord and through the power of your Holy Spirit. Amen.