

June 11, 2017 Holy Trinity Sunday
Rev. Jen Nagel, University Lutheran Church of Hope

Genesis 1:1-2:4, Psalm 8, 2 Corinthians 13:11-13
Matthew 28:16-20

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

In the beginning, on the first day, God created... And God saw that it as good.

And on the second day, and on the third day, and on each of the days, God saw that it was good.

I love the way the three readers led our scripture from Genesis.

They wove together their voices, and then invited our song as we heard this ancient story of our beginnings.

This day, in this place, God's story continues, it always continues... and it is good.

This Wednesday evening parents and grandparents, teachers and friends, a few church folks, settled into the pews, right here in our sanctuary.

Zach took his place at the organ bench, hands poised, feet ready.

The 17 PEASE Academy graduates zipped up their rented black polyester graduation gowns and adjusted their caps and fidgeted, anticipating the very first bars of Pomp and Circumstance.

And then, one by one, on cue, they processed down the aisle, some shy, many proud, a few raising their arms in triumph, parents and many of the rest of us, watching, eyes filled with tears, for the journey has been long, and the journey has not been easy.

Their executive director, Michael Durchslag stood smiling broadly as they came forward, and then he stepped to the podium to begin:

"These 17 graduates," he told us, "together represent 8,030 days of sobriety."

"They are ready to enter the world and share their experience, their strength, and their hope."

Remember that PEASE Academy is the charter high school that shares this building—has for 28 years now!

It's a sober high school, all the students are in recovery.

On their 8,030th day, and on every day before that, and on every day after, God saw that it was good.

So, what does it mean today, this day, to meet a world that is created good, created in God's image?

That's not a bad question in a season of commencement ceremonies.

And it's not a bad question in a week of vexing politics and widespread famine,

the ongoing trial of Officer Yanez and the brokenness and pain that dare pull us apart at the seams.

It's not a bad question, but it may feel like a hard question, and I pray: a vital question.

What does it mean to engage a world that is created in God's good image?

And, to go a step further, given that it is Holy Trinity Sunday, what does the Trinity have to do with it?

In the spirit of the day, three responses to that question, and then a blessing, a promise.

First, it means there is space for Holy Mystery to flourish.

In the 4th century, as heresies tugged and schisms threatened,

our ancestors in the tradition gathered in ecumenical councils to hash out words and ideas,
to try as we humans are wont, to articulate, to delineate the mysteries of God

From this debate, creeds were crafted and the doctrine of the Holy Trinity was born.

It shapes and structures our church's belief, but truth is: it can only go so far—and that, my friends, is good.

It leaves space for God's powerful, beautiful, grace-filled activity, so often where we don't expect it.

Ann Kreider from our congregation returns this week from 6 weeks on the Camino de Santiago in Spain.

She wrote recently: "I've hiked through the whole Easter season.

Never have I felt closer to a risen Christ. Never have I felt such love from people.

Never have I experienced the power of prayer in such powerful ways."

Holy Mystery, dear ones, Holy Mystery at work in Ann's life and in our world,

let us make space for holy mystery.

Second, we have a God who in God's self is relational, communal—God the father/mother/creator, in
relationship with the Jesus the son/the Christ, in relationship with the Holy Spirit.

So to engage God's good world, we must not only remember, but act as though our relationships are
sanctified by a God who is most fully and truly relational.

And it's this God who invites us into relationship not only with God's self, but with our neighbors, on the
campus, across the street, those with the yard sign a little different than yours.

It is God who reconciles us across the divisions that tempt us to isolation.

This morning through Bread for the World we have an opportunity to write letters to our leaders in congress.

If you'd like to participate, remember some of the words of Jesus about caring for the least among us,
about feeding the hungry and loving our neighbors, about speaking truth to power.

It's about relationship—we have a relational God who calls us into relationship, and never lets us go.

Finally, to engage God's world we must believe in, act for, this goodness.

On this day, remember that you are created in the image of God, beloved and cared for, claimed, whole.

In the complexity of this life, in the messy spots, in the struggles with mental health and changing bodies and relationships, in our faith and in our doubt, in moments that feel like failure, let us not forget who we are (you, me, but really, the world) we are created in the image of God, the good image of God.

How quickly we forget, and that simple truth, that reminder of identity, changes everything.

Of all the things that come up in the quiet conversations I share I have with folks, this basic truth from the very beginning of Genesis comes up often, probably the most often... and not only with students and young adults, but with 50 year olds and 70 year olds and 90 year olds.

You are created in the good image of God, beloved, created for good.

And finally] that blessing.

At the very end of Matthew's gospel, after Jesus has given the great commission to go and make disciples, he gives what some call the great promise:

"I am with you always, to the end of the age."

On first day, on the second day, on the 8,030 day, and this day, God is still creating, still stepping back and calling it good.

Dear friends in Christ, God is with you and with our world, always and forever. Amen.