

# Introduction

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Welcome to St. Peter's Lutheran Church Estevan. Pastor Kleemola here to bring you a partial service for Holy Trinity Sunday – June 7, 2020.

## Readings for Holy Trinity Sunday

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Old Testament Reading: Genesis 1:1-2:4a

Psalm: Psalm 8

Epistle: Acts 2:14a, 22-26

Gospel: Matthew 28:16-20

## Text for today's Sermon is taken from Genesis 1:1 – 2:3

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<sup>1</sup>In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. <sup>2</sup>The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.

<sup>3</sup>And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. <sup>4</sup>And God saw that the light was good. And God separated the light from the darkness. <sup>5</sup>God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.

<sup>6</sup>And God said, "Let there be an expanse in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters." <sup>7</sup>And God made the expanse and separated the waters that were under the expanse from the waters that were above the expanse. And it was so. <sup>8</sup>And God called the expanse Heaven. And there was evening and there was morning, the second day.

<sup>9</sup>And God said, "Let the waters under the heavens be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear." And it was so. <sup>10</sup>God called the dry land Earth, and the waters that were gathered together he called Seas. And God saw that it was good.

<sup>11</sup>And God said, "Let the earth sprout vegetation, plants yielding seed, and fruit trees bearing fruit in which is their seed, each according to its kind, on the earth." And it was so. <sup>12</sup>The earth brought forth vegetation, plants yielding seed according to their own kinds, and trees bearing fruit in which is their seed, each according to its kind. And God saw that it was good.

<sup>13</sup>And there was evening and there was morning, the third day.

<sup>14</sup>And God said, "Let there be lights in the expanse of the heavens to separate the day from the night. And let them be for signs and for seasons, and for days and years, <sup>15</sup>and let them

be lights in the expanse of the heavens to give light upon the earth.” And it was so. <sup>16</sup>And God made the two great lights—the greater light to rule the day and the lesser light to rule the night—and the stars. <sup>17</sup>And God set them in the expanse of the heavens to give light on the earth, <sup>18</sup>to rule over the day and over the night, and to separate the light from the darkness. And God saw that it was good. <sup>19</sup>And there was evening and there was morning, the fourth day.

<sup>20</sup>And God said, “Let the waters swarm with swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the expanse of the heavens.” <sup>21</sup>So God created the great sea creatures and every living creature that moves, with which the waters swarm, according to their kinds, and every winged bird according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. <sup>22</sup>And God blessed them, saying, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth.” <sup>23</sup>And there was evening and there was morning, the fifth day.

<sup>24</sup>And God said, “Let the earth bring forth living creatures according to their kinds—livestock and creeping things and beasts of the earth according to their kinds.” And it was so. <sup>25</sup>And God made the beasts of the earth according to their kinds and the livestock according to their kinds, and everything that creeps on the ground according to its kind. And God saw that it was good.

<sup>26</sup>Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.”

<sup>27</sup>So God created man in his own image,  
in the image of God he created him;  
male and female he created them.

<sup>28</sup>And God blessed them. And God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.” <sup>29</sup>And God said, “Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit. You shall have them for food. <sup>30</sup>And to every beast of the earth and to every bird of the heavens and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food.” And it was so. <sup>31</sup>And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.

<sup>1</sup>Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. <sup>2</sup>And on the seventh day God finished his work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all his work that he had done. <sup>3</sup>So God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it God rested from all his work that he had done in creation.

## Sermon – Images of God

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Dear friends in Christ Jesus; “We’re all made in the image of God.” You’ve heard that line. And who would disagree with that? It sounds very much like what you just heard in our text: **“God created man in his own image.”** (1:27) There, in that context, it’s talking about being spiritual beings who can commune with God, who are in tune with His will, who are holy and sinless and fear, love and trust in God above all things. Now, in our day, it’s given a very definite political slant – often invoked by those who are demanding equal rights, to demonstrate that we are all equal, that we’re all the same.

But the truth is that in our world today we are not all the same, and we are definitely not all equal. As I write this, we are in the midst of protests and rioting sparked by the police killing of George Floyd, a black man who was accused of forgery, who did not appear to be resisting arrest in the video of the incident, but who was pinned to the ground under the knee of a white police officer in Minneapolis – a knee that remained in place for nearly nine minutes, including over a full four minutes after Mr. Floyd was non-responsive. Would a white suspect, accused of a similar crime have been treated in the same way? Not all life is considered the same – at least by some people.

And this is certainly not limited to issues of race. Today, children still in the womb aren’t counted as valuable by many. Why else would it be legal to kill them right until the point of birth? Not all lives matter as much as others. Who’s considered higher? White-collar versus blue-collar? Renter versus homeowner? Even in our personal lives we must decide: Is a person worth our time? our effort? our energy? our money? We determine that some are and some are not.

One notable example of this caused no small dispute and contention. After the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, donations were collected to compensate the victims’ families for the loss of their loved ones. But each family didn’t receive the same amount. A determination was made as to what each life was worth. Was a father worth more than a single man? Was an executive worth more than a blue-collar worker? What about the potential for future earnings? And what about the rescue workers? Some families received up to 10 times more than others. The task for determining what each family received fell to one man. After he’d completed his task, he said he’d never do it again.

So what does it mean to be made **“in the image of God”**? It means that in the beginning, when God created all things, man received what nothing else in all of creation received. Every-thing was made “good,” and all creation was “very good,” (v 31) but of no other creature in heaven or on earth can it be said that they were made in the image of God. Not even the angels. This honour was given only to mankind. And made in the image of God means not that we looked like God, but that we were created

in righteousness, with knowledge of God, and true fear and confidence and trust in God. The crown of His creation. Given dominion over all the earth.

Then on the day Adam and Eve sinned, this image of God was lost. No longer do we fear and love God as we ought. No longer do we have any natural knowledge of God as our loving Father. No longer do we have confidence in Him, but we take matters into our own hands. Sin has broken creation. It has broken us. We're different, and we consider others differently.

In the world of marketing today, the maxim is "image is everything." Corporations spend millions of dollars every year trying to create a positive and attractive image for themselves. Sports stars and celebrities are hired to help create a certain image. Yet this image can be lost quickly and suddenly with one product that has to be recalled, with one misstep by a corporate executive, with one scandal involving one of their celebrity spokes-persons. The image of God given to Adam and Eve was also lost quickly, with one act. Just one act. Yet try as we might, we cannot re-create this image for ourselves. Only God can re-create this image in us, through the one He sent to restore His image, His Son, Jesus Christ. For the Christian, His image is everything!

But because of sin in our lives, we resist this. Instead of humbling ourselves before God, seeking His grace and forgiveness to change us, we prefer to hide. Not wanting to be seen "naked" (Gen 3:10), or as we are without the image of God, we try to create substitute images for ourselves. Masks to hide behind, so that others will think a certain way about us. And so perhaps you've created a religious image or mask, so that people will think you're holier than you really are. Perhaps you have an image or mask of bravery to hide your fear. The cry "We're all made in the image of God" is a mask so that you can't condemn me for who I am! And on and on we go. But when all is said and done, we're still broken. We're still sinners. We may be able to hide who we are from each other, but we can't hide this from God. Whatever images we create are poor images indeed.

But the God who created man in His image does not leave us fallen and broken.

The God Who Creates Also Re-creates, and *He* is restoring His image in a fallen and broken world. We can try to create images for ourselves, but only God can create something out of nothing – in the beginning and still today. And so after sin entered the world, after the image of God in us was lost, God acted. The Father sent His Son into the world. The Son, who is the true and exact image of God the Father. And the Son of God incarnate shows us true man, without sin. In Jesus, the image that we lost lives. Jesus is the One who knows His Father. Jesus is the One who has complete trust and confidence in His Father. Jesus is the righteous One.

Yet the Son of God didn't come into the world to restore the image of God in the world only for a time, but for *all* time. So He takes upon Himself our sin, our punishment and death, our broken image,

and in return gives us His Spirit. And through the Holy Spirit, God begins to restore that original image again – the righteous, holy, made-for-communion-with-God image. Through the Holy Spirit, we are *re-created*, made new, and are being conformed into the image of Christ, who is the image of the Father. This is the work of the Holy Trinity for us. The Father, who sent His Son, who sends the Holy Spirit; and the Holy Spirit, who joins us to the Son, who takes us to the Father.

That work is what this day is all about. We celebrate Holy Trinity Sunday not simply to proclaim who our God is – the Trinity in Unity and the Unity in Trinity, although we certainly do that. Today we also proclaim what He has done and is doing for us. We proclaim that the Holy Trinity is *giving Himself to the world* for the life of the world. For your life and mine. To restore His image in us. To give us what we cannot create. If He didn't give it, we wouldn't have it.

With that understanding we can perhaps look at the words we heard in the Holy Gospel in a new light. Those words, known commonly as the Great Commission, are not so much about what we are to do as they are about what God the Holy Trinity is doing. What the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are doing through His church, giving Himself to the world. Making disciples, baptizing, teaching, feeding, raising, forgiving, through the means that He has given. The voices and hands and feet may be ours, but the work is our triune God's: His water, His body and blood, His words. Through these means restoring, re-creating, giving, making something out of nothing. Creating again children in His image, conforming us to the image of His Son.

The terrorist attack in the Garden of Eden caused devastation to our world. It has affected each and every one of us. The task of recovering what was lost that day fell to one man, and He determined that each life was worth His own. And so He gave His life for your life. He suffered the shame and nakedness of the cross and then rose from the dust of death, that all who believe in Him might be raised from the dust of death with Him and live not only forever, but already now, again in the image of God. And after He had completed His task, He said it need never be done again. It is finished. You are whole. You are healed. You are forgiven and re-created.

“Blessed be the Holy Trinity and the undivided Unity. Let us give glory to Him because He has shown His mercy to us.” Indeed, that is what this day is all about. The Holy Trinity in mercy giving Himself to us, and we in turn giving glory to Him. And not simply here in church, but daily in our lives, living the image we have been given again. Living – to use Luther's term – as *little Christs* in the world. Giving to the least. Determining that each life is worth our own. Not because *they* are in the image of God, but because *we* are. Amen.

# Prayer of the Church

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O blessed and holy Trinity, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, hear the prayers of Your people and grant to us all things according to Your Word and promise.

In the beginning, Father, Your Word spoke all things into being and from nothing You made all that is. Help us to see the imprint of Your love in the goodness of creation and to exercise responsible care of all that You have entrusted to us.

Throughout the ages, Father, Your Spirit filled the sin-stained world with hope and called us to repentance and faith. Help us to hear the voice of Your Word and to respond with faith, confessing You without fear before all manner of people and in every corner of the earth. As You planned long before the world began, deliver us in Christ, that we may be Your own and live according to Your commands all our days.

In this day and in this time, Father, raise up for Your Church godly men to serve as pastors and faithful teachers and church workers to make known Your saving Gospel. Raise up faithful servants who will heed Your call and serve to the best of their ability wherever You place them.

In Baptism, You joined us to our Saviour's death and resurrection, Father. Guide us, that we may live out faithfully the new lives born of water and the Spirit, serving You with all our bodies, minds, souls and strength. In the face of disease and death, make us bold to expect that we will be united with Him in a resurrection like His.

In government and law, Father, You work to establish and preserve order, protecting the weak and fostering godly virtue. Bless our Prime Minister; our Premier; and all who make, administer and judge our laws. Deliver the world from the threats of pandemic and tyranny, and preserve the nations in peace. Bless all who defend us in the armed forces, aid us in emergency and medical fields, and inform us with news. Hinder those who oppress any peoples with mistruth, violence or fear.

In the hour of trial and in the moment of trouble, You are there, Father. Hear us as we cry to You for the sake of the sick, the troubled in mind, the wounded in heart and those who grieve, especially Pattie Berday, Meriam Koch, Wanda Stang, and the family and friends of the late Gerald Olson. Deliver them from affliction as You will, and sustain them in hope with a patient heart and strength for the day.

Father, in the blessed Supper of our Lord, Your Son has offered us His body as the bread of heaven and His blood as the cup of salvation. Help us to receive this blessed Sacrament with faith and to show forth the fruits of the Spirit in lives of faith, repentance and goodness.

In the company of the saints, Father, You have shown us that You will not abandon Your people but will keep them to everlasting life. Receive our thanks for those who have gone before us with the sign of faith and now rest from their labours, and bring us at last to dwell with them in Your presence forevermore.

In our worship, Father, You serve us with gifts of Your grace so that forgiven we might know the gift of a clear conscience and redeemed we might honour You with all we think, say and do. Accept the sacrifice of our praise and the tithes and offerings we bring.

All these things and whatever else You know we need, we pray You to grant us, Father, for the sake of our Saviour Jesus Christ, through whom, with whom and in whom, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, all honour and glory are Yours, almighty Father, both now and forevermore. **Amen.**

## Benediction

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The Lord bless you and keep you.

The Lord make His face shine upon you and be gracious unto you.

The Lord lift up His countenance upon you and give you peace.