

GRACE EPISCOPAL CHURCH
Sheboygan, Wisconsin

Trinity Sunday (A)

Genesis 1.1-2.4a

Psalm 8

2 Corinthians 13.11-13

Matthew 28.16-20

Trinity Sunday is unique on the Episcopalian calendar as commemorating a theological doctrine. In the Roman Church the Assumption of Mary (15 Aug.) and Immaculate Conception of Mary (8 Dec.) are arguably “doctrinal” feasts (although Rome defines these doctrines to be dogmas), but in the Anglican tradition feasts either recount an event in our Lord’s life or in the life of a saint. Trinity Sunday is thus unique.

Genesis 1.1-2.4a

1. The first story of creation found in the Bible is the most complete, for it recounts the creation of all of the world.
 - a. The beginning phrase “In the beginning” has been used in all translation traditions since about the third C., B.C., but the actual Hebrew reads “Beginning[!]” Because of the form of the verb used, the phrase can be translated as “When God began to create ...”, but the verb is, in fact, timeless.
 - i. The form of verse 1 looks to verse 3 to complete the sentence, with v. 2 being a parenthetical in which the state of things at the time God spoke is described.
 - ii. In the Torah, Genesis takes its title from its opening word, *Bere’shit* (“when” or “beginning”).
 - b. In modern languages the most common title is “Creation History” (*e.g.*, in German, *Schöpfungsgeschichte*. The title in English derives from the Greek word for beginning/creation.
 - c. The first creation story is theorized to be from the “P” (Priestly) tradition, one of four sources identifiable in the writing of the Pentateuch (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy).
2. In ancient cosmology nature is the scene for the emergence of people. The P account is thus focused on how mankind came to be, not on the details of the creation of the world and life forms.
 - a. This account is not inconsistent with theories of evolution, for the six “days” of creation are not defined.
3. In each case God looks upon His creation and pronounces it “good”. This is in polar opposition to the Gnostic belief system in which matter is evil and spirit good.
 - a. At the completion, Creation is deemed “very good”.
 - i. The word used for good can also mean “beautiful”.
 - b. God blesses His creatures, instructing that they “be fruitful”.
4. Creation is described as the act of God, but the passage is notable for its reference to the Spirit, here translated as “a wind from God”. In ancient Hebrew understanding, the Spirit is the active principle or power of God.
 - a. Christian revelation recognizes the Spirit to be more than a principle or power, but a Person of the Trinity.

- i. Humankind is created in the “image and likeness of God”. Here God uses the plural “our image,” and this is taken as a reference to the Persons of the Trinity

Psalm 8

1. A hymn of praise to the LORD as creator, which in part echoes the story of creation found in Genesis 1.
2. The references in vv. 5 and 6 to the son of man who is set “but little lower than the angels” is Christological.
 - a. As a *man* Jesus, the pre-existing Word, became lower than the angels.
3. He is adorned with “glory and honor,” references to the splendor of the LORD contained in v. 2.
 - a. Hebrew 2.5-9 explicitly equates the references in this psalm to Jesus Christ.

2 Corinthians 13.11-13

1. The concluding salutation and farewell in 2 Corinthians contains the Trinitarian benediction: “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with all of you.”
2. We’re used to hearing the reference being to the “fellowship” of the Holy Spirit.
 - a. The word Paul uses is *koinōnia*, which connotes an active, giving fellowship of sharing and communion.
 - i. Paul uses a genitive grammatical form. Is this communion “of” the Holy Spirit given *by* the Spirit, or is it *in* the Spirit?
 1. It doesn’t matter! Fellowship given by the Spirit must result in fellowship with the Spirit (Phil 2.1).
3. Ephesians 5.23 is the only real parallel to this Trinitarian benediction. Paul does, however, refer to each element in the blessing elsewhere:
 - a. “The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ”: 1 Cor. 16.23; Phil. 4.23; 1 Thes. 5.28; Rom. 16.23.
 - b. “The love of God”: The love flowing from God is manifest in the power-laden grace (2 Cor. 12.9) given by Jesus Christ, which creates the “common union of the Holy Spirit”.

Matthew 28.16-20

1. Following Jesus’ instruction to the disciples, they go to Galilee, and receive the “great commission” from the risen Lord.
 - a. The mountain to which Jesus had directed them is the same mountain where He appointed them disciples. This is the mountain of the Transfiguration (Matt. 17), where His true nature was revealed.
2. The disciples see and worship Jesus, but His words are emphasized.
 - a. Some still “doubt” (although they see the risen Lord!)

- i. This reflects the common psychological phenomenon of wondering if what we experience is real, but it also may reflect that the some disciples doubt *themselves*. (“What am I supposed to do?”)
 - 1. Jesus makes it clear what the disciples are to do.
- 3. When Jesus says that all authority “has been given” He is using the past tense and a theologically passive voice. God, the LORD, the Holy Trinity, has bestowed all authority on the Son.
 - a. This authority is that of the kingdom of God (*cf.* Dan. 7.14; 2 Chr. 36.23; Matt. 6.10).
- 4. “Go therefore”: Jesus speaks in the present tense. We are not to await in acting.
 - a. Jesus makes explicit reference to the Persons of the Holy Trinity.
 - b. His commission is universal (“Go ... [to] all nations ...”)
 - i. The disciples are to continue His teaching mission, that those baptized into the faith may grow in fullness in the faith.
- 5. In Paul the Spirit is the presence of Jesus among us. Here Jesus makes His presence explicit.