**Trinity Sunday**

**June 15, 2014**

**In the name of the God of all Creation,**

**The God alive in each of us as God was alive in Jesus,**

**And the power of God known in the Spirit.**

**Amen.**

There was a time before there was time. There was a moment that lasted billions of years before there was a sun and a moon to define our seasons and weeks. There was a time when millennia, and centuries, and decades, and years, and months, and weeks, and days, and hours, and minutes, and seconds, and even nanoseconds had no meaning or measurement. Then there was that instant when a point of particularity became so dense that it exploded in on itself in the Big Bang. That is one of the stories of the Creation, but we know that it is not the only one.

How does one explain the unexplainable? Sometimes you beat around the edges. Sometimes you speak in metaphors. Sometimes you resort to poetry. How does one explain the origin of our universe?

Today is Trinity Sunday, the Sunday after the Feast of Pentecost. At Christmas we heard the story of the birth of Jesus, the Son of God, and then through the season of Epiphany and Lent we heard stories of his life leading him to Jerusalem … to his crucifixion and death. On Easter we heard the story of the Resurrection, and throughout this past Easter season we heard the stories of new life experienced by those who had been his followers. On Pentecost the Holy Spirit came upon those followers … with the promise that the Holy Spirit still comes upon the Church today. Today’s reading from Genesis is a reminder of the God of all Creation … the God in whose image we are all made.

The Big Bang theory … the cosmological model of the universe, not the TV show … the Big Bang theory is one story of the Creation. First proposed in 1927 it took until 1964 before evidence could be found to substantiate the theory. But, like much scientific inquiry there is conflicting evidence, so it is still considered a theory. Interestingly, many of us grew up not hearing about the Big Bang until we got into college. And yet now the Big Bang theory of the origins of our universe is so predominant that they made a TV sitcom using the name.

This generation of humanity is scientifically sophisticated, at least relatively speaking. But what about 2,500 years ago? How did our spiritual ancestors explain the unexplainable? They did so with the story we just heard read from the First Chapter of Genesis.

*Bereshit* … the Hebrew word that is translated “In the beginning …” That is the first word in our Bible … *bereshit*. “In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth …

The structure of the text invites us to hear this story of Creation as poetry … a stunning declaration about the nature of God. This story was never meant to be science. These words were written at the time of the Babylonian exile in the 6th century BCE, and they were written to assure those who have been dislocated in time and space that God is more powerful than the chaos that had overtaken them … that nothing, whether exile, loneliness, illness, or unemployment, could separate them from the God of all Creation.

The creation story in Genesis doesn't enlighten us about science as we understand the discipline today. That's not the purpose of this poetry. The translation we are familiar with reads, “In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth …” However, the New Revised Standard Version of the bible offers an alternate translation of the opening words in a footnote … it says that there are many who translate it as "when God began to create." This alternate reading highlights that the Hebrew word *bereshit* refers to the beginning of a series of actions, rather than a first moment in time. Thus, God's first creative action identifies God as the One who exists outside of time, outside of the created order, but who is known to us by the act of creation. God's creative actions are not limited to seven days; rather, they describe the very nature of God as One who is constantly engaged in the act of creation.    And the orderliness of creation contrasts with the chaos described by the watery void. This also points to the intentionality that informs God's acts of creation … these creative acts are not random, but come forth by the will of God who pronounces them all to be “good.”

Since the 2nd century after Jesus, when Irenaeus (I-REE-NEE-US) a bishop in Lyon, penned the concept, many theologians have embraced the doctrine of original sin … the separation, and alienation from God, from ourselves, from each other, and even from the earth. I have no doubt that there is evil in the world, and we confess the power of sin in our lives every Sunday morning. For confirmation of humanity's "fall" from divine grace we need only pick up the daily newspaper and read of the most recent scandal, or turn on the evening news and contemplate the latest environmental catastrophes. But prior to, and more important than, original sin is Original Goodness. The essential goodness of creation is the most conspicuous theme in the Genesis story of Creation. On the successive days of creation the author repeats the same refrain six times, that what God created is good:

* “And God said, ‘Let there be light’; and there was light. And God saw that the light was good"
* “God called the dry land Earth, and the waters that were gathered together he called Seas. And God saw that it was good"
* “The Earth brought forth vegetation: plants yielding seed of every kind, and trees of every kind bearing fruit with seeds in it. And God saw that it was good"
* “God made the two great lights … the greater light to rule the day and the lesser light to rule the night … and the stars. God set them in the dome of the sky to give light upon the earth, to rule over the day and over the night, and to separate the light from the darkness. And God saw that it was good"
* “So God created the great sea monsters and every living creature that moves of every kind, with which the waters swarm, and every winged bird of every kind. And God saw that it was good"
* “God made the wild animals of the earth of every kind, and the cattle of every kind, and everything that creeps upon the ground of every kind. And God saw that it was good"

The greatest amount of narrative space in the Genesis Creation story is given to the creation of humankind. Just as God has created order out of chaos, a life-giving environment in which all of creation can thrive, so too humankind … created in the image of God … has the capacity to create an order within creation that is life-giving for the whole of creation. This is perhaps the best way to understand that language of "dominion" … it is not intended to give us license to abuse creation. Rather, we are created to promote well-being.

And the creation of humankind also tells us something about God. With the creation of humankind, God is no longer the only creative force in the universe. God's willingness to share this power with humankind is a remarkable invitation to partnership and an act of trust … it is the basis for our covenant with God. God has blessed us in Creation, and we are to be a blessing to that Creation.

On the sixth day, "God saw all that he had made, and it was *very* good.” And satisfied with this "vast array" of created goodness, on the seventh day "God rested from all his work."

 The notion of our planet's ongoing preservation is as important as its original creation. Most remarkable of all, says the Hebrew poet who wrote this story, when God finished his creative activity, he "rested." He then turned to humankind created in his very own image, and said, "Here, now it is yours, to populate, to steward, and manage, but not to plunder, neglect or exploit." Whereas creation was God's divine act, preservation is our distinctly human responsibility. It is up to us to care for the goodness of God's gift of creation.

On Christmas Eve 1968, the Apollo 8 astronauts Frank Borman, Bill Anders and Jim Lovell celebrated humanity's first orbit around the moon by reading ten verses of this 3,000-year-old poetry. Even those who are Biblically illiterate would have recognized those evocative words. They were the verses we just heard read from the Book of Genesis: "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth …."

The Apollo 8 moon shot was a few years before I went to seminary, but I can still remember the emotional impact of those ancient words as people around the world watched the grainy television images and listened to NASA's crackly radio transmissions. Planet earth never looked so beautiful, so mysterious, and so very fragile.

Less well-known than the astronauts’ reading of Genesis from lunar space is a prayer that Frank Borman subsequently offered to "people everywhere.” After completing their scientific work, he took a breath, and then prayed for God's good creation and every human being created in God’s image: “Give us, O God, the vision which can see your love in the world, in spite of human failure. Give us the faith to trust the goodness in spite of our ignorance and weakness. Give us the knowledge that we may continue to pray with understanding hearts, and show us what each one of us can do to set forth the coming of the day of universal peace. Amen."

Trinity Sunday. The Trinity: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The God of all Creation. The God that is alive in each of us as God was alive in Jesus. And the power of God known in this world as God’s Holy Spirit.

Remember that God’s Creation was deemed “good” by God. Remember that you are a blessed child of God made in the image of your Creator. Remember that you have been blessed so that you can be a blessing. We have a covenant with God … let us work faithfully to leave this world a better place for generations yet unborn. Let us live fully into Original Blessing and be a blessing to God’s Creation.

Amen.