

Genesis 1:1-3

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Good Shepherd Lutheran Church + Boise, Idaho
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Creation and New Creation

The Word of the Lord from Genesis 1:1-3: "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. 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. And God said, 'Let there be light,' and there was light." This is the Word of the Lord.

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen

"In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth," begins the book of Genesis. As the Father creates, the Spirit is present and hovering above the waters. And what of the Son? He's there too. John tells you so at the start of his Gospel with the words, "In the beginning was the Word, and ... all things were made through Him" (John 1:1-3). The Word in John 1 is the Son, of course: so when God says, "Let there be light" at the start of creation, the Son – the Word – is at work to bring light into existence.

God – Father, Son and Holy Spirit – creates, and God creates by speaking. He speaks, and there is light and water; earth and sky; trees and plants; sun, moon and stars; fish and birds and animals. His Word is powerful *and* extraordinarily creative. He speaks color and dimension and size and motion into being. He speaks feather and fur and scales, paws and hooves. He speaks atoms and chromosomes, enzymes and proteins. He creates endless variety and holds it all together.

He speaks *life*. He doesn't create a portrait or a lifeless landscape. Mankind can create some pretty ingenious things with the minds that God has given – cars and smartphones and microwaves are nifty things; but only God can give life. He speaks it into creation so that there are creatures that breathe and think and feel and do.

Not only does He give life, but He involves creation to produce more life. He doesn't keep speaking new trees out of nothing, but He speaks seeds into them so that the trees He has created can help produce more. He doesn't just keep speaking new creatures into existence, but He enables them to reproduce.

That's *huge*, and this is what is going on when He says to Adam and Eve, "Be fruitful and multiply." God could keep creating men and women out of dust and ribs, but instead He says, "Be fruitful and multiply." Clearly, God is the One who gives life, but He gives creation the honor of being His instruments for doing so. With the blessing "Be fruitful and multiply," man and woman are His chosen instruments for bringing more human life into the world. Every baby (no matter the circumstance of conception or birth) is a gift and creation of God – Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

In God's creativity, He honors Adam and Eve by creating them in His own image. We cannot fathom the depths of what that means; in part, it's that they reflect His holiness in all that they do. As Father, Son and Holy Spirit are one – and are one in fidelity and love, so it is given to Adam and Eve to become one exclusively in fidelity and love so that more life is brought forth. To them, God gives a blessing that He doesn't give to anything else: "fill the earth and subdue it." He entrusts creation to their care; and as He loves to work and to serve, so He gives to Adam and Eve the gift of labor in their care of creation and loving service to one another.

Then God rests on the seventh day. All things are created, and He calls things good. Good doesn't mean, "less than excellent." This is no B+ creation. When God calls His creation good, it is perfect and holy in every way.

That creation is the work of God – Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

It is ruined already in Genesis 3, when Adam and Eve fall into sin. The consequences are horrific, culminating in death. But God does not leave them without hope: He also tells them that a woman will bear a son who will defeat the devil and redeem creation.

In the fullness of time, God fulfills His Word. Jesus is born of the Virgin Mary. Mary is the mother of God, though not of the Father or the Spirit. The Son has come to save, to save by service and sacrifice.

You can see that when Jesus begins His public ministry: His first act is to be baptized by John the Baptist in the Jordan – baptized, you'll remember, with all of those sinners. By being baptized with all those sinners, Jesus is identifying with them: in fact, He's taking their place and headed for death on the cross. And what does the rest of the Trinity think of this? The Spirit descends upon Him, while the Father declares from heaven, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Mark that well: as Jesus formally begins the long trudge to the cross, it's clear that this plan for your salvation is not the Son going rogue, but the will of the triune God.

It's not a quick trip to the cross: it's three years from His baptism to crucifixion. What does Jesus do along the way? He does what He did in Genesis 1: He speaks to create. He speaks and creates light in the eyes of the blind, sound in the ears of the deaf. He speaks and chases leprosy away as surely as He first chased darkness away with light. He speaks and creates life in the bodies of the dead. As Lord of creation, He speaks and restores calm to stormy seas. Even better, He speaks and creates faith in the hearts of the lost. This is not just the labor of the Son, but the will of His Father and the work of the Holy Spirit.

So while people only see Jesus on His way to the cross, this is the work of the triune God. You can't have the Father without the Son. You can't have the Son without the Father. You can't have either without the Spirit, or the Spirit without the others.

God is at work on Calvary. He dies for you – not the Father and the Spirit, but the Son. He bears your sin on the cross. The Father forsakes and condemns His Son in your place. But the Son does not remain forsaken. He rises from the dead and gives the Holy Spirit to His disciples so that they might go about the work of forgiving sins.

That gets us to our Gospel lesson for this week, where Jesus says to His disciples, "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, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age." (Matthew 28:18-20)

You've got Father, Son and Holy Spirit there. Look what they are doing: they are creating, for if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation (2 Corinthians 5:17). They are making disciples, creating people of God out of all nations. And how do they do it? It sounds kind of like Genesis 1, which began with the Spirit hovering over the waters and God speaking; here, disciples are created by baptismal waters and teaching. God still creates by His Word. He attaches it to water, drowns your old sinful nature and raises you up a new creation in Christ. He speaks life into you by His Gospel. This is the work of the triune God for you: it's why you are baptized and absolved in the name of Father, Son and Spirit.

Not only that, but He gives you the privilege of speaking life. Remember how He gave Adam and Eve – and thus all married couples – a part in bringing new life into the world? Now He gives His people a part in bringing new, eternal life. He doesn't baptize by shouting from heaven while it's raining: instead, most properly, He uses pastors as His hands and voice to apply water and speak the Word in baptism. He gives to all of His people – He gives to you – the part and the joy of speaking life to those around you by speaking His Gospel to others. And as you speak, the Holy Spirit is at work in that Word to create life and bestow forgiveness, faith and salvation.

It is by that Word and the Spirit's work that Christ dwells in you. He is the image of God, says 2 Corinthians 4:4. Until you are delivered from this sinful world and fully restored in heaven, you have the image of God because you have Christ, the image of God.

A little bit more Law and Gospel then, as this sermon winds down.

First off, the Lord reveals to you who He is: the triune God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. On Sunday, I mentioned that it would not be good for a husband to say to his wife, "I don't care who you are, but just what you do for me." It would be worse to treat the Lord that way, though your sinful flesh always wants to take who God is for granted. It wants you to groan because the Athanasian Creed takes an extra three minutes to talk about who God is, and you'd rather the service be done three minutes earlier. It wants you to consider God a distant entity without much detail. For such sins and the like, repent. Rejoice in who God is. Start and end your day in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit (and the sign of the cross, if you like), to remember the triune God who created you, redeemed you and sanctifies you. Make the study of His Word a priority every day, so that you may see all that Father, Son and Holy Spirit are up to throughout the ages *for you*.

Second, remember how "Be fruitful and multiply" is a blessing so that more life comes into the world? Our Gospel lesson proclaims another, similar privilege – the privilege of God's gift of delivering life – new life – to dead sinners by speaking His Word to them. You have the honor being God's instrument to speak His Word. The reason it can be so difficult is because the greatest gifts of God are always under the greatest attack, and the last thing your sinful flesh wants you to do is start proclaiming Christ who conquered sin. There are times to speak and times to refrain, sure; but if you are not speaking the Word at all, why not? Repent. Pray. And talk.

And hear and rejoice. Rejoice because the triune God who created you and accomplished His plan for your salvation at the cross, continues to care for you. He is with you to the end of the age. He continues to see that His Word is spoken into your ears, renewing the life given in baptism and keeping you a new creation in Him.

Oh, rejoice, for the triune God remains with grace for His repentant people, and so you are forgiven for all of your sins.

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen