

## **Sermon Draft**

**Text: Genesis 1:1–2:4a**

**Sermon: Trinity Sunday 2020**

The culmination of the festival cycle of the Church Year, the Feast of the Holy Trinity draws our attention to the fact that our salvation is a restoration to the divine life. All that Christ has accomplished—from taking on flesh, being born of a virgin, manifesting himself to the Gentiles, ministering among Jews and Gentiles, suffering, dying, and rising for our forgiveness, to granting us the Holy Spirit with all his gifts has as its goal a restoration to the divine life in the Holy Trinity.

So, it is fitting at this time in the Church Year that we honor and glorify Father, Son, and Holy Spirit as working our salvation and restoring us to their fellowship.

Our text this morning is the story of creation, so what does Genesis 1 have to do with the feast honoring the Holy Trinity? Much in every way. We know of the trinitarian references and undertones of this chapter. In the beginning is God—the Father, we might say.

But with him in the beginning is his Spirit, the Holy Spirit, one who is not part of the heaven or earth that God has just brought into being, one who is not of the creatures who are only created later. He is with the Father in the beginning, hovering over the new creation. And there is, of course, the Word. And God said: "Let there be!" Let there be. Let there be light. Let there be an expanse. Let there be vegetation and lights and birds, and swarming creatures, and beasts. The Word of God goes forth, not returning without accomplishing what he will. The Word of God is with God. He is God. He is in the beginning with God. From the beginning there is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, in love and wisdom creating the world.

And there is the wonderful phrase, "Let *us* make man." Let *us*. God is not alone, solitary, unaccustomed to loving others, aloof in his nature. He is the Father. He is the Son. He is the Holy Spirit. Thus, they act together in creation. They consider together to make the pinnacle of creation, the man. Man, in their image. Man, who is not alone. Man, who loves.

Man, who will relate to God and love him, receiving his goodness and righteousness and dominion, and returning thanksgiving, praise, and worship to this Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, in whose nature he is made. Thus, it is not good for man to be alone in his nature. As God in his nature is not alone, neither does God make the man in his image to be alone. From eternity, God is not alone; he is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, communing with one another in mutual love.

When we think of man not being alone, we think of him being made male and female. We think of God considering to “make him a helper fit for him” (Genesis 2:18). Yet man is not to be alone in an even more fundamental way, and that is for his life and righteousness. To be in the image of God is more than just to reflect God’s character and attributes. To be in the image of God is to receive from God the very essence of life and righteousness. Just as a mirror depends on a person even to send forth a reflection, so man depends on the righteousness of God as his own righteousness.

This dependence of Adam on the righteousness of God is at the heart of what it means to be in the image of God. The image of God in Adam is, most important, Adam's love of God, proper fear and honor of God, and his trust in God. Through this love, honor, and trust, Adam receives righteousness from God and reflects it upon creation by his exercise of dominion. In the beginning, then, we confess that Adam has an original righteousness. Even this is not a righteousness of his own, however, but a righteousness that comes from God and is reflected in the image of the man, Adam.

To receive and reflect this righteousness of God, Adam is included in the divine fellowship. As the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit commune eternally with one another, when they create Adam, they invite him to participate in this divine communion.

Living out of this divine, righteous communion, Adam reflects the righteousness of God and is able to exercise true, good, and beautiful dominion over the rest of creation. Indeed, it is not good for Adam to be alone not only alone from other men, but alone from God!

Were he to be alone from God, separated from God, he would no longer reflect this divine righteousness.

Although it is not included in today's text, we know that shortly after Adam's creation in the image of God, reflecting the divine righteousness and participating in divine fellowship, Adam turned away from this righteousness, fellowship, and image to pursue his own imaginary good and evil. And with that turning away came a loss of this righteousness, a loss of this image, strictly speaking, and a loss of this fellowship with God. And such would have been the destiny for all men, for all men begotten and generated in the image of Adam: to be without God, without righteousness, without his image that is, to be alone, and on the path to death.

Thus, it is that the Feast of the Holy Trinity really points us to the restoration of the life we have with the Holy Trinity. It is not just a Sunday for abstract racking of the brain to figure out how three can be one, or one three.

Rather, the feast is the culminating celebration of God's work to restore us to himself, of restoring the image of God in us, and of restoring us to the fellowship and togetherness of the divine life.

We are man and woman. We are made in the image of God, depending on God's life, love, and righteousness. God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit so desires us to live in his image. So, God also has become a man, to restore us to himself. We lost our righteousness in Adam; we became alone without God, wandering the earth without hope. So, God became a man to restore us to him, to rescue us, to bring us back into his divine life.

Psalm 8:5 says of the Son, "*You have made him a little lower than the heavenly beings.*" When the Son took on human form, although he remained God, he did not use all of his divine characteristics, so that his human nature was, for a while, lower than the angels or heavenly beings. God took on human nature, and for a little while did not use all of his divine attributes.

It is very similar to what St. Paul says of Jesus in Philippians 2:

*“Though he was in the form of God, . . . [he] emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross” (2:6–8).*

This is Jesus, the Son of God, he made himself to be lower than God for a brief time. That is, he did not use all of his divine power so that he could suffer and die on our behalf. This is how much God: Father, Son, and Spirit loves us! He became like us in our human nature, so that he could take upon himself the isolation, the condemnation, and the suffering of Adam and those in the image of Adam. He did not leave us alone or to suffer eternal wrath. He became like us, bore the condemnation for our sin, and reconciled us to God.

So, after he is made a little lower than God, he is “crowned . . . with glory and honor” (Psalm 8:5). That is, rising from the dead, Jesus ascends into heaven and sits at the right hand of God, taking on again forever the full use of his divine power, and even exalting his human nature to this divine, exalted place. Jesus is crowned with the glory and honor of God, ruling over us with love and grace, having justified us and reconciled us to the Father.

We see how vibrant and joyful this feast of the Holy Trinity is! It is not an abstract idea about God. Rather, the celebration of the Trinity reminds us how God in his love and in each person longs to reconcile us to himself, and in fact works to accomplish our reconciliation. So great is this mystery that the Son even takes on flesh, suffers in our place, for a brief time finds himself forsaken by the Father, and then rises in triumphal return to his Father, taking us with him.

Yes, indeed! In the Son, we now enjoy the fellowship with the Father already, as Paul writes in Colossians 3:



*“You have been raised with Christ. . . . You have died [to sin], and your life is hidden with Christ in God”* (3:1, 3). When the Son ascends to the Father, he takes us also with him to fellowship with him, and the Father, by the Spirit. God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit reconciles us to himself.

In Christ, the image of God has been restored. Christ lives in us, baptized as we are by the Holy Spirit. The Father welcomes us with love, feeding us the feast of salvation, the feast of victory to our God.

This is our God: true Father, Son, and Spirit, vibrant in life and love for one another, and welcoming us into this vibrancy and love through the merits of the Son. To this Son, Christ, be all the glory, forever and ever.

Amen.