

*This message was delivered by Rev. Pamela Graf Short to the People of Prayer of the Tontogany Presbyterian Church on Trinity Sunday, June sixteenth in the year of our LORD two thousand and nineteen. This was also Father's Day.*

Genesis 1:1-5

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth,  
the earth was chaotic and useless and darkness covered the face of the deep,  
while a spirit from God swept over the face of the waters.  
Then God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light.  
And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness.  
God called the light Day, and the darkness God called Night.  
And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.

John 1:1-5

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.  
Word was in the beginning with God.  
All things came into being through Word, and without Word not one thing came into being.  
What has come into being in Word was life, and the life was the light of all people.  
The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.

Mark 1:1-11

The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.  
As it is written in the prophet Isaiah,  
"See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way;  
the voice of one crying out in the wilderness:  
"Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight,' "  
John the baptizer appeared in the wilderness,  
proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.  
And people from the whole Judean countryside  
and all the people of Jerusalem were going out to him,  
and were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins.  
Now John was clothed with camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist,  
and he ate locusts and wild honey.  
He proclaimed, "The one who is more powerful than I is coming after me;  
I am not worthy to stoop down and untie the thong of his sandals.  
I have baptized you with water; but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."  
In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan.  
And just as he was coming up out of the water,  
he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit descending like a dove on him.  
And a voice came from heaven, "You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased."

Mark 12:28-31

"Which commandment is the first of all?"  
Jesus answered, "The first is, "Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one;  
you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all  
your strength.'  
The second is this, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself.'  
There is no other commandment greater than these."

Paul's letter to the Romans 8:11-19 adapted from *The Message*

It stands to reason, doesn't it,  
that if the alive-and-present God who raised Jesus from the dead moves into your life,  
God will do the same thing in you that God did in Jesus, bringing you alive to God's own self?  
When God lives and breathes in you (and God does, as surely as God did in Jesus),  
you are delivered from that dead life.  
With God's Spirit living in you, your body will be as alive as Christ's!  
So don't you see that we don't owe this old do-it-yourself life one red cent?!  
There's nothing in it for us, nothing at all.  
The best thing to do is give it a decent burial and get on with your new life.  
God's Spirit beckons. There are things to do and places to go!  
This resurrection life you received from God is not a timid, grave-tending life.  
It's adventurously expectant, greeting God with a childlike "What's next, Papa?"  
God's Spirit touches our spirits and confirms who we really are.  
We know who God is, and we know who we are: Parent and children.  
And we know we are going to get what's coming to us - an unbelievable inheritance!  
We go through exactly what Christ goes through.  
If we go through the hard times with Jesus,  
then we're certainly going to go through the good times with Jesus!  
That's why I don't think there's any comparison between the present hard times and the coming good times.  
The created world itself can hardly wait for what's coming next.

Our Bible story for today is a relationship story;  
not just an ancient relationship story,  
but an eternal one.  
Today we ponder the Trinity:  
One God in three persons;  
most commonly named  
God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit.  
While I personally prefer the name  
God the Parent, God the Child and God the Holy Spirit, you get the idea... Well maybe.  
It seems that this whole concept of the Trinity is a bit hard to grasp.  
How do we take hold of the God who takes hold of us?

Before animals and humans,  
before oceans and land,  
Before whales sang and mice scampered  
before the twinkling of stars  
and the beams of the moon  
before time, seasons, and days and years  
There was God.  
In the beginning there was God.

We often speak of God in terms of  
"helper" "savior" "ruler".  
But who was God before there was anyone to  
help, to save, to rule?

We read of God's love; God's devotion;  
But who was the recipient of God's love and devotion when all there was, was God?

I have heard of a theology that says God was lonely, and thus God created creatures to satisfy God's loneliness.  
There is nothing in scripture that offers supports for this theory.

Why?

Because a Trinitarian God has no reason to be lonely.

A Trinitarian God is a God of relationship,  
of communion,  
of love within the Three; within the One.

Whenever we talk about the Trinity it is important to state clearly that we are not talking about 3 gods,  
but one God in three persons.

Why this insistence?

Because the roots of Christianity are found in the Jewish faith,  
a faith that makes clear we are to worship one, and only one God.

No wonder the Jewish leaders of Jesus' day were beside themselves with the notion of Jesus as the Son of God.

This brings us to another important point of clarification:

While we may hear "Son of God"

as something other than God,

in the ancient world to be "Son of God" was to be God.

When you read "Son of God", think "God the Son" and then you will be closer to the ancient understanding.

Having said that, I recognize that all of our language falls short of any complete description of God,  
and so we must hold lightly exact terminology.

But of course we keep searching for words, for images, to help us take hold of the God who takes hold of us.

Maybe math will be useful. As scientific thinkers we turn to examination; we turn to logic and formula.  
We like things we can take touch and taste and smell and hear and see; things we can inspect.

Take this box for example. It has 3 dimensions:

Length, Height and Depth.

We note that its length is certainly different from its height and its depth.

We note that it is one box and if any of its three dimensions are taken away, it will no longer be a box.

Maybe science can help us take hold of the God who takes hold of us.

Here is another scientific example: A pyramid.

The pyramid has sometimes been used as an example of God. But does it really work?

It is fairly common for people to view the place of an earthly father and the place of the Heavenly Father with  
the image of a pyramid.

Remember playing King of the Mountain as a kid?

...Did you ever play Queen of the Mountain?... Anyway, what was the goal?

To have one and only one person on the top of the mountain.

Too often, fathers are like pharaohs sending down edicts from on high.

Too often this is how we see God the Father.

Someone standing on top of all else whose main purpose is ordering about the Son and the Spirit and then of  
course all of humanity.

Once when I was in conversation with a pastor about the Trinity, I suggested that God the Father was not really like a pyramid.

The pastor said, “But what is God the Father doing if he is not in charge?”

Well, how about loving?

Yes, earthly fathers and Heavenly Father do send forth commands,  
but never for the sake of the command itself,  
never for the sake of power,  
never so that God the Father can remain on the top of the mountain,  
but all for the sake of love;  
for the sake of safety;  
for the sake of community;  
for the sake of wanting the children to live into the love they were created to enfold.  
All for the sake of taking hold of the God who takes hold of us.

Perhaps one question for today is this:

Is science our only way of discerning the world around us?

Is it the only way of helping us take hold of the God who takes hold of us?

In her book *God For Us*, Catherine Mowry LaCugna uses the metaphor of dance to help us take hold of the God who takes hold of us. Rather than insisting that one member of the Trinity is somehow greater or more in charge than the other members of the Trinity, she invites us to picture all three in a dance—moving, holding, encircling, outstretching, enveloping one another; an eternal movement of reciprocal giving and receiving (p. 272).

Yes, you can explain dance steps scientifically,  
as in a pattern,  
but dancers will tell you that something happens well beyond science when the movement begins.  
Mystery takes hold  
and what was once mechanical become artistic;  
what was robotic becomes romance.  
Romance with another dancer,  
but also love of the dance itself;  
or love of something unexplained that is a part of the dance;  
love of moving in and through and around the glory of One God leaping and twirling and bowing with us;  
with creation; with the heavenly beings.

A dance that was eternal before the world was  
and a dance that will continue into infinity  
calling,  
drawing,  
inviting us to participate in the mystery of the Trinity,  
a dance that helps us take hold of the God who takes hold of us.

Now may our One Eternal Trinitarian God  
Reach for you in honor  
Step with you in beauty  
And leap with you in  
Holiness  
Mystery  
And  
Joy  
Now and into the everlasting dance of love