



## We Made This

*A Sermon Preached by the Rev. Sarah Hedgis  
Trinity Sunday ~ June 7, 2020*

### Genesis 1:1-2:4a

IN THE BEGINNING God created the heavens and the earth. But the earth became chaos and emptiness, and darkness came over the face of the Deep—yet the Spirit of God was brooding over the surface of the waters. Then God said, “Light: Be!” and light was. God saw that light was good, and God separated light from darkness. God called the light “Day” and the darkness “Night.” Evening came, and morning followed—the first day.

Then God said, “Now, make an expanse between the waters! Separate water from water!” So it was: God made the expanse and separated the water above the expanse from the water below it. God called the expanse “Sky.” Evening came, and morning followed—the second day.

Then God said, “Waters under the sky: be gathered into one place! Dry ground: appear!” So it was. God called the dry ground “Earth” and the gathering of the waters “Sea.” And God saw that this was good.

Then God said, “Earth: produce vegetation—plants that scatter their own seeds, and every kind of fruit tree that bears fruit with its own seed in it!” So it was: the earth brought forth every kind of plant that bears seed, and every kind of fruit tree on earth that bears fruit with its seed in it. And God saw that this was good. Evening came, and morning followed—the third day.

Then God said, “Now, let there be lights in the expanse of the sky! Separate day from night! Let them mark the signs and seasons, days and years, and serve as luminaries in the sky, shedding light on the earth.” So it was: God made the two great lights, the greater one to illumine the day, and a lesser to illumine the night. Then God made the stars as well, placing them in the expanse of the sky, to shed light on the earth, to govern both day and night, and separate light from darkness. And God saw that this was good. Evening came, and morning followed—the fourth day.

God then said, “Waters: swarm with an abundance of living beings! Birds: fly above the earth in the open expanse of the sky!” And so it was: God created great sea monsters and all sorts of swimming creatures with which the waters are filled, and all kinds of birds. God saw that this was good and blessed them, saying, “Bear fruit, increase your numbers, and fill the waters of the seas! Birds, abound on the earth!” Evening came, and morning followed—the fifth day.

Then God said, “Earth: bring forth all kinds of living soul—cattle, things that crawl, and wild animals of all kinds!” So it was: God made all kinds of wild animals, and cattle, and everything that crawls on the ground, and God saw that this was good.

Then God said, “Let us make humankind in our image, to be like us. Let them be stewards of the fish in the sea, the birds of the air, the cattle, the wild animals, and everything that crawls on the ground.” Humankind was created as God’s reflection: in the divine image God created them; female and male, God made them.

God blessed them and said, “Bear fruit, increase your numbers, and fill the earth—and be responsible for it! Watch over the fish of the sea, the birds of the air, and all the living things on the earth!” God then told them, “Look! I give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the earth, and every tree whose fruit carries its seed inside itself: they will be your food; and to all the animals of the earth and the birds of the air and things that crawl on the ground—everything that has a living soul in it—I give all the green plants for food.” So it was. God looked at all of this creation, and proclaimed that this was good—very good. Evening came, and morning followed—the sixth day.

Thus the heavens and the earth and all their array were completed. On the seventh day God had finished all the work of creation, and so, on that seventh day, God rested. God blessed the seventh day and called it sacred, because on it God rested from all the work of creation.

These are the generations of the heavens and the earth when they were created.

Lector: Hear what the spirit is saying to God’s people.

### Psalm 8

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| 1 | O God our Governor, *                        | your majesty is praised above the heavens.                 |
|   | how exalted is your Name in all the world!   |  |
| 2 | Out of the mouths of infants and children, * | 3 You have set up a stronghold against your adversaries, * |
|   |  | to quell the enemy and the avenger.                        |

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| 4 | When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, *<br>the moon and the stars you have set in their courses, | 8  | All sheep and oxen, *<br>even the wild beasts of the field,                                   |
| 5 | What are we that you should be mindful of us, *<br>mere mortals that you should seek us out?                       | 9  | The birds of the air, the fish of the sea, *<br>and whatsoever walks in the paths of the sea. |
| 6 | You have made us but little lower than the angels; *<br>you adorn us with glory and honor;                         | 10 | O God, our Governor, *<br>how exalted is your Name in all the world!                          |
| 7 | You give us mastery over the works of your hands; *<br>you put all things under our feet:                          |    |   |

**2 Corinthians 13:11-13**

And now, sisters and brothers, I must say goodbye. Mend your ways. Encourage one another. Live in harmony and peace, and the God of love and peace will be with you. Greet one another with a holy kiss. All the holy ones send greetings to you.

The grace of our Savior Jesus Christ and the love of God and the friendship of the Holy Spirit be with you all!

**Matthew 28:16-20**

The Eleven made their way to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had summoned them. At the sight of the risen Christ they fell down in homage, though some doubted what they were seeing. Jesus came forward and addressed them in these words: "All authority has been given me both in heaven and on earth; go, therefore, and make disciples of all the nations. Baptize them in the name of Abba God, and of the Only Begotten, and of the Holy Spirit. Teach them to carry out everything I have commanded you. And know that I am with you always, even until the end of the world!"

For over a week now, there have been uprisings across the country protesting the murder of George Floyd by a Minneapolis police officer.

At the heart of this movement is the demand for us as a country, especially us as white people, to dismantle the system of white supremacy—a system that privileges and protects whiteness at any cost, especially at the cost of black and brown people's lives. It is a call for us to face the sinful lie on which this country was built, and to replace it—once and for all—with this truth: Black lives matter.

While it's not radical to say this in a sermon at St. Peter's, many of my white colleagues are facing push back as they preach about the reality of racism. To them, I say: Stay strong. Speak the truth in love. We are with you.

And to us at St. Peter's - What is the Word this morning? I believe it is the word that Jesus gave to his disciples in our gospel reading: Keep going; I am with you, even to the end of the world.

It's a word we need to hear. Because it's my prayer that the world is ending, at least the world as it is: filled with relentless racial injustice. But it will be difficult. It is simultaneously going to take longer than we want AND we will constantly feel like aren't ready to do all we need to do. There are things we will lose, privileges and preferences that have a stronger hold on us than we realize.

In other words, our commitment to ending white supremacy, to moving from being racist by default to becoming anti-racist by choice—it's going to lead us to a mess; it's going to reveal our mess. And we don't like messy.

That's why I am so glad to be preaching on this Trinity Sunday. Because the Trinity is one of the messiest and most elusive tenets of our faith: One substance, three persons. Three in one. Different and undivided. Alive, moving—yet always unified. Constant. Faithful. Yes. But static? Never. The Trinity leaves us with more questions than answers.

And we're okay with that. That's what shocks me! When it comes to the Trinity, we are okay with knowing that we do not know. We hold that tension. No one wants to wait until we've got a full handle on the Trinity before we proclaim its importance. We uphold its mess and mystery, baptizing in its name!, because we trust it draws us into the life of God. With the trinity, the unknown is not a threat to us...it is an invitation.

This morning, I wonder what the Trinity—specifically, our uncharacteristic comfort with the uncertainty and freedom of the Trinity—shows us about how to live into this moment. What does our openness to this eternal mystery offer us as we encounter the brokenness of the world and our role in it?

As a predominantly white congregation, part of dismantling white supremacy is facing Christianity's role in this system. On a call earlier this week, faith leader Brian McClaren just put it out there: White supremacy is Christian.

America's white supremacy learned its structures, language, and rules from the Church. The Doctrine of Discovery, Manifest Destiny—these are church-created and church-sanctioned teachings that uphold 1) the supremacy of Christians above and against all other people; 2) the value of property over people; 3) the emphasis on destroying difference. This is the theology of submission that has polluted and deformed the Christian religion so greatly, and is being played out in white supremacy.

Earlier this week, Donald Trump tear gassed and forcefully removed peaceful protestors so he could take a picture in front of St. John's, Lafayette Square, an Episcopal Church in DC. The president's action was blasphemous, but it was not preposterous. From his approach to the location to the Bible he held in his hand, this was an inevitable outcome of our history as the Church. Just like the murder of George Floyd—an evil, heartbreaking, inevitable outcome of our deep, pervasive racism.

McClaren said, "I feel the worst thing that could happen in the world would be Christianity as it exists today to have a resurgence. Christians have a job to detoxify our own religion of toxic supremacy." White American Christianity, as it exists today, is a supremacist religion.

Supremacy is a big word, and sometimes big words feel like they're for big lives. I'm not being cute here. How many of us have apologized for being supremacist in our daily lives? When I assume someone's pronouns and they correct me, I don't say, "Sorry, that was supremacist." I say sorry for being rude or assuming.

And so, for those of us who are white American Christians, what does supremacy look like in our everyday lives? What language or feelings is it clothed in? Because if we have any chance of detoxifying the church, we must do the same for ourselves.

My friend told me a story years ago about her husband getting into a fender bender. Everyone involved was okay, but the front of his car was damaged. The day after the accident, he went straight to the auto garage, first thing in the morning. When he got home, he was worked up, anxious, even frustrated. "What happened?" my friend asked him. "They say they can't work on my car until later this week. Other cars are in worse shape. And I won't get mine back until Monday." My friend started to work through how the two of them could coordinate using their other car, but her husband interrupted, "I know we can sort it out," he said, "but I just...I want it settled, now." / "We do not like to feel unsettled," my friend said to me, "We are used to wanting to make things right, and right away. Discomfort isn't for us."

Now, you may say that you do not have to be white in order to identify with that story. Sure. No one likes inconvenience or discomfort, no one wants things to stay unresolved. But I believe there is a particular way that white people identify with this story because of our whiteness.

No one wants to feel anxiety, frustration, discomfort, but only white people think that our desire to not feel those things should be more important than anything else and enough to make the situation change. Now. It is the part of you that experiences an overly busy autoshop as a personal affront. The part of you that wants to feel in control: to speak to a manager, call the police, lie to 9-1-1. The part that wants a detailed list of how to dismantle racism; wants to feel either passionate or at peace, preferably at the times that work for you. The part of you, perhaps your least favorite part of you, that says, "I can see this matters, but I matter more."

If we cannot be honest about this, then the work stops here. And we should at least be honest about that. I mean, keep donating money and stuff, but we cannot say we are a congregation committed to anti-racism.

But if we choose to really face and dismantle supremacist ideologies, in ourselves and in our tradition, the Holy Trinity is this surprise, almost in-through-the-back-door exception to a tradition that otherwise demands certainty and control. I used this quote in my last sermon but it's worth repeating here: "What else would be worthy of God? In God you do not include less and less; you always see and love more and more." This is the testimony of the Trinity - of the inner life of God - but it is also our testimony about the Trinity. We believe in it; experience it; order our lives around it, all while knowing it is not ours to control nor to completely understand.

This is the mindset and the lifestyle we must bring to the work of anti-racism. To be curious and open. To be honest about what we cannot know—and to trust it anyway. To be present to our discomfort and uncertainty. To recognize and sit with our ambivalence—those mixed feelings or contradictory ideas. To be expansive.

I'm going to take advantage of our current online format and share a project created by my friend, Braheem Wilson. You will watch his oscar-winning films one day, so just remember you heard about him here first. Braheem curated a series of images, posting them on instagram under the series title, "We made this." For each image, Braheem created a "we made this caption;" they're meant to be experienced as one.

I want to be clear: This is not a sermon illustration to try to tie up things neatly. Maybe not even to make us feel better.

I share it because it is gospel. Because, for a long time, we assumed it was the Church building the kingdom of God, but we have been building empire. That is painful. Repairing this will be our most necessary and most difficult work. But the good news of the gospel is that God's promise has not been dormant or waiting. The kingdom of God is being built; it's been being made. Braheem Wilson's "We Made This." [video]

It's time to let go of the supremacy we've inherited and too long accommodated. Through God's faithfulness, the Holy Trinity is one of the ways the white church has resisted the idea that we must live in comfort and control. The unknown of the trinity is ok to us because in it we experience God's expansiveness and love. Despite our fear of the unknown, the same is true for ending racism and rearranging our world. The liberation of Black people is fundamental to the liberation of all people. This is how we join in this building up of God's kingdom.

It is time to undauntingly walk with those who we did not include in the creation of our world, but who went on and continued to build up the world God has been creating and calling very good since the beginning. May it be so. Amen.