

Trinity Sunday Worship June 7, 2020

Trinity United Methodist Church

Pastor Geri Hamlen

Opening Prayer

Creator God, The words You speak are the life and sustenance of all that exists.
Savior Jesus, the life you give is the re-creation and renewed birth
of all that is broken and worn.

Holy Spirit, Your stirring in our souls is the inspiration
for creativity, compassion, joy, and community.

Life-giving, life-restoring, life-fulfilling God; may our whole lives be worship.
In all things, may we seek to connect with and to reflect your love and your hope.
Amen.

Amended posted on **The Minor Keys**. <http://theminorkeys.blogspot.ca/>

Scripture Reading Genesis 1: 26 – 31 **The Message (MSG)** Copyright © 1993,
2002, 2018 by [Eugene H. Peterson](#)

In these times of social unrest, riots, marches in protest of the unfair treatment of people with darker skins than us...let's go back to foundational scriptures that affirm the dignity that God intends for everyone, everywhere and all the time. Let's go all the way back to the beginning, In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, the light and the darkness. Let's think about When God created the dome of heaven, the waters, the dry land, the plants and the animals of every kind and everything that creeps upon the ground of every kind. And for each of these many things that were created, God saw that they were good. And then came the day....and we'll pick up here with a reading from The Message interpretation of Eugene Peterson.

²⁶⁻²⁸ God spoke: "Let us make human beings in our image, make them reflecting our nature

So they can be responsible (share stewardship per Jim Wallis)

for the fish in the sea,

the birds in the air, the cattle,

And, yes, Earth itself,

and every animal that moves on the face of Earth."

God created human beings;

God created them godlike,

Reflecting God's nature.

God created them male and female.
God blessed them:
"Prosper! Reproduce! Fill Earth! Take charge!
Be responsible for fish in the sea and birds in the air,
for every living thing that moves on the face of Earth."

²⁹⁻³⁰ Then God said, "I've given you
every sort of seed-bearing plant on Earth
And every kind of fruit-bearing tree,
given them to you for food.
To all animals and all birds,
everything that moves and breathes,
I give whatever grows out of the ground for food."
And there it was.

³¹ God looked over everything God had made;
it was so good, so very good!
It was evening, it was morning—Day Six.

Message

Imago Dei

Pastor Geri

Day 6...God is happy. God looked over everything God had made and found it Good, so very good.

I wonder what God is thinking today, looking over everything. Does God see goodness? Have you seen goodness this week? It's a time honored devotional question...Where have you seen Jesus lately?

There's so much trouble in the streets and cities and hearts of this country, here, there and everywhere. It's hard to focus on the good...But today is Day 7, the Sabbath...a day of rest. A day to look back and reflect and remember, not just where we went wrong, and where the world is out of whack and where our American cities and systems are messed up but also...to remember where is the goodness and mercy and beauty that God makes possible. Pondering and reflecting on that is a good use of our Sabbath day.

But first, let's look at this Scripture reading and think about what it's saying. This first Chapter of Genesis is so rich with God's creative powers and with God's hopes and dreams for us and the world and the cosmos. Rabbi Shai Held, who I will be quoting today, wrote in an article in 2018: *If we truly took the Bible seriously, I'm not sure we would ever get past the first chapter.* ¹ Because Genesis 1 reveals to us, God's plan for the world.

Yes, God created the world for a purpose. For goodness. And in God is telling us more and more about that goodness and how it is to be lived out.

Verse 26 that I just read tells us that each and every human being, male and female, is made in the image of God. "Let us make human beings in our image, make them reflecting our nature.

There's a seminary word for this: 'Imago Dei' Most of you know me...I don't go throwing around ancient language vocabulary words very often but Imago Dei is such an important Latin phrase: 'In the image of God.' We human beings are created in the image of God. That's a big deal. Always has been, from the beginning.

Because in Ancient Near East societies...the KING, or the emperor, or the Pharaoh, were the only ones who were believed to be the image of god. The political leadership of that time, was, in that culture, appointed to rule over others and to mediate God's blessings with everyone else.² No one else had access to God's power and purpose. Just the big kahuna, the one and only ruler. Everyone else was ruled, enslaved, lower than...less than. Even expendable for the purposes of the king.

What our creator God said is...unh, unh. Not in my world. It's not just the king who is created in the image of God. It's actually each and every human being, male and female. Past, present, future. Here, there and everywhere. No one is less than anyone else. In Genesis 1, as Rabbi Held says: '...we are all kings and queens. No one is destined to rule over anyone else; no one is born with the right to control or dominate others.'³

Let me say it another way: *We hold these truths to be self-evident: That all, means all, are created equal and endowed by the Creator with certain inalienable Rights...*⁴ When was the last time you heard these words from the American Declaration of Independence? That sentence is the harvest/off-spring/grandchildren of the Genesis words...*God made them, male and female, black and white and yellow and pink and brown and freckled, God made US in the image of God.* No one is better or worse than the other. We are all kings and queens, my friends.

Imagine how different this past week would have looked if down through the history of this country, if the government, the police, the banks, the prisons, the schools and the churches had treated everyone like a king or a queen. Rabbi Held, tells us that there is a teacher of the Talmud, a Jewish book of wisdom, who teaches that as a person, makes their way in the world, angels walk before them and proclaim, 'Make way for an icon of the Blessed Holy One.'

You know what an icon is...in more Orthodox churches, they use icons, pictures and statues for meditation to draw closer to God. To sense God's purpose. And God doesn't make mistakes. Or make junk. And each of us is a reflection, an image of God.

It was God's intention and purpose that we would all be wonderful and respected and worthy of protection and opportunity to the same level, the same degree. No exceptions. No take backs. No racism. No bigotry. No prejudice.

How different this week might have been if that had been the case down through the history of our country.

The treatment of people of color in America, from the beginning, has been a denial of the Good and Very Good creation that God made of us. That's why the UM and many others say that racism is a sin.

Racism is living in opposition, in defiance of God's purposes.

Racism is living in conflict, actually doing damage to God's good creation.

Racism is treating people not with respect but out of fear of their differences,

Out of pre-conceived notions of their inadequacy,

Out of distaste and contempt for the color of their skin or the place of their family origin...

Racism is wrong. And we need to stop doing it. And stop ignoring it. And we need to start noticing it and talking about how wrong it is when we see it or hear about it or learn more about it.

I really appreciated a commentator I heard this week who helped me understand how it is that my parents raised me to NOT be prejudiced. That was a good thing. They told me that there's no difference between people because of skin color. And they really made sure we knew that the N word was totally awful to say. But because we lived in a white suburb of Chicago, there was no interaction, no discussion and no education about how to be in relationship with people of color. And there was no talk about what it might be like to live as a brown or a black or a Native person.

It's quite possible that my parents died not knowing:

African Americans and whites use drugs at the same rate and yet the incarceration rate for African Americans for drug related crimes is 6x that of whites. ⁵

And here in America, Black bodies in America are 77% more likely than white ones to have diabetes.

And Black people are dying at much higher rates from Corona virus than white bodies, and the infant mortality rate among Blacks is twice that of whites in America.

Black mothers are 4x more likely to die in childbirth than white mothers.

Black bodies are 2.5x more likely to be killed by police violence. This isn't ideology. It's MATH.⁶

I'm not making this stuff up, my friends. It's real. It's documented. I have links I can send you if you want to see where I found this information. It's researchable and my parents wouldn't have known that but I know it. And now you know. And these are realities that are well worth talking about.

The commentator explained to me that It's the silence of my parent's generation that makes it hard for me to speak of these things. My parents didn't know how to talk about the different experience of minority people in this country. And maybe yours didn't either. But here's the deal:

God has a purpose for us. For me. For the church. And that purpose includes noticing and lamenting and talking about how and when we as human beings are ignoring God's intentions and forgetting that we are all, each of us, created Imago Dei, in the image of

God. Kings and Queens—each of us. All of us. Everyone, everywhere and all the time.

So you can maybe see why Rabbi Held could say that *If we truly took the Bible seriously, I'm not sure we would ever get past the first chapter.*⁷ I've been talking for almost 3 pages and we're still on the one verse 26 where God said *I'm going to make human beings in my image.* The scripture goes on, of course, to say, as Eugene Peterson interprets it:

God created human beings;
 God created them godlike,
 Reflecting God's nature.
 God created them male and female.
 God blessed them:

And God goes on with instructions:

 "Prosper! Reproduce! Fill Earth! Take charge!
 Be responsible for fish in the sea and birds in the air,
 for every living thing that moves on the face of Earth."

I could probably go on for another 3 or 6 or 9 pages on all of that. And Genesis goes on in Chapter 3 to tell us about the first (but certainly not the last) disobedience, defiance of God's purposes. But I won't. Not today. Let me just point out for now that the Scripture we read today tells us that God's purpose is for us to prosper, to flourish, to fill the earth and to treat each other like Kings and Queens.

That is also what Jesus was teaching us and showing us through his life and death and resurrection. He too was created in the image of God. He was God incarnate. And he experienced the pain of being disrespected, incarcerated, whipped and destroyed. We hate it that this happened to Jesus. Let's hate it when it happens to any of those who share our humanity.

And remember that the Resurrection of Jesus assures us that we and every human being, everywhere and all the time, can have new life that is compatible, simpatico with God's purpose as presented to us in Genesis 1. God's kingdom come, God's will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

Remember too that Jesus sent us the Holy Spirit to give us the power and the strength to insist that all people everywhere be treated with dignity and respect. As the angels say...*Make way...here is an icon, one created in the image of the Holy One.*' Let's all think about and talk about how we can serve God's purposes as we rely on the presence of God through Jesus and accept the power of God's Spirit flowing through everything we do for everyone we know. Consider that as Jean and I play...some music for reflection. Amen.

Special Music for Reflection *Let All Mortal Flesh Keep Silence* #626 3 verses

Pastor Prayer

O God, the Holy Spirit,
come to us, and among us;
come as the wind, and cleanse us;
come as the fire, and burn;
come as the dew, and refresh;
convict, convert, and consecrate many hearts and lives
to our great good and to thy greater glory;
and this we ask for Jesus Christ's sake. **Amen.**

Benediction 2 Corinthians 13: 11 – 13

¹¹ Finally, brothers and sisters, farewell and rejoice.

Put things in order, listen to my appeal,
agree with one another, encourage one another, live in peace;
and the God of love and peace will be with you.

Greet one another with a holy kiss. All the saints greet you.

¹³ The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ,
the love of God, and the communion of, and the sharing in,
the Holy Spirit be with all of you.

¹ Held, Shai, 'We're All Royalty,' Christian Century, Nov. 7, 2018, p. 12 - 13 Rabbi, president and dean of Hadar in New York.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Declaration of Independence, 1776

⁵ A Pastor Letter Nadia Bolz-Weber from The Corners, nadiabolzweber@substack.com, June 5, 2020
<https://www.naacp.org/criminal-justice-fact-sheet/>
<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/04/01/opinion/coronavirus-black-people.html>
<https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2020/05/americas-racial-contract-showing/611389/?fbclid=IwAR0v6a-ujWPtDOSH4in2FglcsTH4NNlqwdU-N-YjFLX3b1nNHh73D4sVp58>
<https://www.usnews.com/news/healthiest-communities/articles/2019-08-01/black-babies-at-highest-risk-of-infant-mortality>
https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/magazine/magazine_article/america-is-failing-its-black-mothers/
<https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/interactive/2020/05/mapping-police-killings-black-americans-200531105741757.html>

⁶ Bolz Weber, *ibid.*

⁷ Held, Shai, *op. cit.*