

Sermon for Trinity Sunday, June 7, 2020
by The Rev. Elizabeth Eaton, Presiding Bishop of the ELCA

Well, a lot has changed since last Trinity Sunday, not just the COVID-19 pandemic under which we live. But also, the killing of George Floyd, an unarmed, handcuffed black man by a white police officer in Minneapolis. Just a few weeks ago, we learned, many of us, of the shooting of Ahmaud Arbery, but since that time, Breonna Taylor, Dreasjon "Sean" Reed, Tony McDade have also been killed. And how many others whose names are known only to their families and to God?

Today is Trinity Sunday. It's a hard holiday for us to wrap our minds around it's a difficult, a difficult concept. But, we learn about the Trinity, particularly in today's first lesson from Genesis. In this beautiful song of creation, we hear, "In the beginning, when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep. And a wind from God swept over the face of the waters."

God said and creation began. Martin Luther put it this way, "So also the Christian Church agrees that in this description there is indicated the mystery of the Holy Trinity, Father created through the Son who Moses called Word, and over this creative work brooded the Holy Spirit. Later, God says, "Let us make humankind in our image". This is the glorious relationship with God that spills out into all creation. God is not a lone ranger. And all of God shows up, all of God shows up, delighting in creation, caring for creation, weeping for creation, redeeming creation.

I confess that I do not fully understand or even have language to describe the mystery of the Trinity, probably won't until I finished my baptismal vocation and stand in the presence of God. I can't explain how, but I can testify to the great Lutheran question, what does this mean?

God is relationship. Within God and flowing from God. Creation is God's decision not to look after God's self but focuses God's energies on

creation. This Trinity, this God, this relationship is outward and overflowing. God is the one who does not grasp.

As we hear in Philippians, "Let this same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, who though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as a thing to be grasped. Likewise, the Spirit is poured out on us all. Again, what does this mean? God is relationship. Within God, with the creation, with humankind and among humankind. And since we are baptized into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, baptized into the Trinity.

We are also part of this powerful, dynamic, living, giving, loving relationship, with God, in God, with creation, with each other. We are inextricably woven together. No one is alone. No one is beyond the fierce, tender love of God and God is not far off. God is present in creation, in each of us and in all of us. God is flesh and blood made visible in Jesus of Nazareth and in every human being.

God is spirit, closer than our own breath. And this is how God as Trinity shows up today. God is creator. God created diversity, beautiful, vital, alive. We must reject calls for colorblindness. That diminishes and washes out God's gift of diversity. We in the white majority can begin to see our siblings of color more clearly. We should be color amazed, recognizing the strength that comes with all our many colors and God as creator made all of us in God's image. "Let us make them in our image" that means all of us are a part of this relational triune God who did create all of humankind, each and every one and all of us together, in God's image, all. And God is the word made flesh. Our flesh, your flesh, my flesh, George Floyd's flesh.

Jesus in his passion still suffers with those who suffer. The crucifixion of an unarmed, handcuffed man lying face down on the street is the crucifixion and the passion of our Lord. The crucifixion of so many, too many, black and brown people, who live constantly with the violence of

racism, is the passion of our Lord.

And God is spirit. The wind, the breath that moved over the face of the deep at creation, the breath of God that was breathed into the first earth creature, Adam. The breath of Jesus as he gave them the gift of the Spirit, the breath crushed out of George Floyd, the breath of life God had given to him. And now, church, we as the baptized, those of us baptized into the Trinity, show up.

We work for an end to violence, the violence of racism that kills bodies and maims souls. And we work for the end of violence brought about by lawlessness and also frustration, masquerading in some cases, as protest.

In the fierce love of the Trinity, we do not deny anger. In the face of the reality and inequity of racial injustice, anger is appropriate, is appropriate. But we use our anger to bring about change. We put out fires at the stores, workplaces, churches and property but we ask the Spirit kindle in us the fire of justice.

We work for calm and quiet throughout our country, but we remain disquieted as we search deep within ourselves. We work for peace, but not the passive peace that allows the mechanisms of racism and white supremacy to stay in place. No, it's the peace God alone can give that gives us the strength and courage to act. The Trinity is a relationship, within God, with creation, with us and among us. Until the white majority feels in our soul that the pain and suffering of black and brown people is our own pain and suffering, it will not be safe to be black or brown in America. And until we feel in our own soul that this is our pain in our story, we are not open to the relationship that God wants to shower, share, lavish upon us as a relational God, a loving God, as a God of the Trinity, as a God who has brought us into that relationship and commands us to share that relationship and live that relationship with creation and with each other.

Paul's second letter to the Corinthians ends, "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all". It's actually a promise and I think marching orders for us. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ is with us, the love of God is with us, the communion of the Holy Spirit is with us and, together in the communion and community of the Holy Trinity, we can make that a reality.

Amen