

GOD: AN EVERPRESENT-TENSE VERB
Genesis 1: 1- 2: 4a; Matthew 28: 16-20
Trinity Sunday • June 7, 2020
by Pat Berger

Think for just a moment about creating out of a "formless void," in "darkness," creating from chaos. According to the writer of Genesis 1, that is where God started -- not from nothing, but from a formless void, from dark and chaos. The closest I can come -- and it isn't dark, but seems formless and certainly like chaos -- is our kitchen after we've had 25 people for Thanksgiving dinner. Further from home, and more importantly, we could think of cities, Portland included, where demonstrations recently have turned into very sad chaos.

Because our God created first, these other chaoses, small and large, are worth cleaning up, and today is one of those in the life of the church, when we celebrate God's creating. Our God -- Creator, Redeemer, Sustainer -- spoke, and we have a world. God spoke, and there was. Here's a little thing I learned: if in a reading, the word said comes before the word God, or Lord or other name for God, if the word said comes first, then the writer generally means that God is speaking. If the word God comes before said, then the writer usually means that God is creating. So: "said God" -- God is talking; "God said" -- God is creating.

". . . and God said . . ." we read here, in the creation story; God speaks, and things happen. Amazing. The mom in me is really impressed. How many times over the years have did I say to one young son or another, "It's time to . . .," or, "Please pick up your . . .," or "Don't forget . . .," and: nothing happens. But God, God speaks, and heavens and earth, and their generations, are created! Out of desolation and confusion came heavens and earth, and then light and darkness -- enough for the first day, and it was good. Notice that there was light and darkness but the sun had not yet been created, so that connection had not yet been made for the writer.

And so we march through the creation story, with God speaking, the various components coming into existence, God calling them good. Well, you may have noticed that there was one day where God didn't say it was good -- and if you didn't notice, you may want to go back and look at the story one more time. On the seventh day, God was finished; the Holy One rested. Earth had been separated from heavens, light from darkness, waters above from waters below, dry land from waters below, and now one day from all the others, in order that the work that had been done and the One who had done it might be honored.

This is a lot to have happened simply because someone -- even God -- SAID. And see what happens when we move from the Creator to the Redeemer, in our reading from Matthew; Jesus said! The disciples had gone to the mountain in Galilee, as Jesus had told them. When they saw Jesus, they worshiped him and they doubted. (The word some is not in the Greek; the word translated but is as well translated as and.) The resurrection hadn't changed much, and the disciples then weren't so different from Jesus' disciples now: they worship him, and they doubt. Notice, too, that Jesus didn't chastise the ones who doubted. They were given the same assignment as the others. Time was at a premium; no time now for a mid-course correction. It was time for the disciples to get to work.

Go, Jesus said. I don't think Jesus said that calmly. I quite imagine him leaning toward the disciples gathered around him, his intense eyes meeting each of theirs, and saying, "GO!!!" And I imagine the disciples looking back, thinking, this is it! Time to go to work! All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to HIM, and WE are the ones being sent. Accompanied by the One Who Accompanies, Holy Spirit, we are to go to all nations, to baptize and teach all that we have been taught.

And, Jesus said, don't forget this part: I am with you always, to the end of the age. At the beginning of Matthew, we read that the child to be born will be known as "Emmanuel" -- God with us. And now, Jesus

will indeed be with us until the end of the age. Those disciples, and disciples today, us, we will work not only for Jesus, but also with Jesus.

It's pretty nifty, what we do in Jesus' name. We offer something that we have never seen. And we can only offer it; we cannot force anyone to believe. And yet: having been sent out by the One in whom we believe, and with the assurance that we will be accompanied always -- we go. Whatever we do and however we do it, we show those around us what it is to be a beloved child of God; to be one who believes in the Son; to be one who is accompanied by Holy Spirit. And because of The Three, The Trinity, most often we are blessed to be able to do a pretty good job.

And so today, Trinity Sunday, we celebrate our Creator God who spoke our world into existence, who spoke the Son into existence, and who continues to speak. We celebrate the Son, who spoke our task, and who promised to be with us always. And we celebrate Holy Spirit, who walks beside us as we go. Our world feels like a more tenuous place in these past months. There isn't time for us to wait to get about the work that has been assigned to us by this Trinity, work for which we have been prepared by this Trinity, and work at which we will be accompanied by this Trinity. It is time for us to respond to Jesus' word. It is time for us to GO.

Let us pray.