

**+ Genesis 1:1-2:3 + The Mystery of the Trinity +  
+ 1st Sunday after Pentecost: Holy Trinity + 15 June 2014 +**

There's nothing quite like a good mystery. Good mysteries are fascinating. They have twists and turns, clues uncovered, and pieces of a grand puzzle put together as the solution becomes ever clearer. If the mystery is worth its salt, the solution will be worth the adventure it took to get there.

This morning we celebrate a great mystery—the mystery of the Holy Trinity, the mystery of the way that the true God chooses to reveal himself. Understanding who God is has been an age-old desire. Countless people have tried to figure out the mystery on their own, but to no avail. The search for God can be frustrating, but when the true God is found, the mystery becomes eternally rewarding. It is the greatest mystery of all with the best solution—the answer to the ancient question, “Who is the true God?”

**“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.”** To get a glimpse of who the true God is and what he has done for us, Moses takes us back to the beginning—THE beginning of time, when **“the earth was formless and empty”** and **“darkness was over the surface of the deep”**.

At first, there really was nothing there, but after six, 24-hour days, there was everything! On the first day, God shattered the silent darkness with the clear command, **“Let there be light”**. Moses tells us, **“...and there was light. God saw that the light was good...”** God was pleased, so he kept going.

God didn't destroy darkness altogether, but created day and night. That was just the beginning. In the days that followed, God formed the waters of the earth, the sky above, the seas and the dry land covered with vegetation. Then he created the sun, moon and stars, the fish of the sea, the birds of the air, and all land animals. Moses tells us God's reaction every time. **“...God saw that it was good.”**

...But God wasn't done yet. Moses recounts for us a mysterious conversation that gives us a glimpse at the mystery of the Trinity. **“Then God said, ‘Let us make man in our image, in our likeness...’”**

To whom was God talking? It wasn't the angels. No, God the Father spoke to the other persons of the three-in-one God—God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. That **“image”** was something that nothing else in creation would share—a will, mind, and attitude perfectly in line with God's holy will, a perfect reflection of God's holy will in thought, word, and action. That was a gift only the true God could impart to the crown of his creation. This was such a big deal that Moses gets poetic as he describes the creation of mankind. **“God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.”** Moses later tells us that God formed man out of the dust and woman out of one of the man's ribs.

God in his infinite mercy had created all this—light, dark, day, night, sky, land, seas, vegetation and animals—simply to provide for humanity. Our Creator God took tremendous care to create a universe that was the perfect home for man and woman, but God wasn't going to just leave them there. No, **“God blessed them and said to them, ‘Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it...I give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food....’”** God promised to continue to care for the beloved crown of his creation.

God was pleased with what he had created. He **“saw all that he had made, and it was very good.”** Everything was perfect, so **“...on the seventh day he rested from all his work. And God blessed the seventh day and made it holy...”** The almighty, eternal God didn't need to “rest” from hard labor like we do, but instead, he set aside a day for his creation to rest and to give mankind an opportunity to worship him.

How did God do all this? The writer of Hebrews gives us a simple explanation. **“By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God's command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible.”** (11:1) The universe was created simply by God's command. Only the true God could create life where before there was none. He didn't use billions of years of evolution to finish the job. No, the Lord accomplished all this by his Word as the Psalmist once sang, **“By the word of the LORD were the heavens made, their starry host by the breath of his mouth.”** (33:6)

Now that leads us to another question in this mystery. We read this lesson on Trinity Sunday. How do we know the triune God was even present at creation? Malachi tells us that God the Father actively created the universe, **“Have we not all one Father? Did not one God create us?”** (2:10) Moses tells us that God the Holy Spirit was protectively hovering over creation. **“...[T]he Spirit of God was hovering over the waters.”**

...But what about Jesus, the Son of God? John gives us a little insight into that question referring to Jesus as **“the Word”**. **“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He**

**was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of men.**" (1:1-4) Where was Jesus at creation? He was the life-giving **"Word"** that did all the work!

With our mystery, we have the what—the triune God created all things and provides for us. We have the how—the life-giving Word of God, but we don't have the why. Why did God do all this? Why does it matter that we know who the true God is?

Well, it all boils down to grace. God's love moved him to take special care to create a perfect setting for his most beloved creation. A couple chapters after we see God's beautiful love in action, Moses recounts for us the ruin of that creation, which brought death and judgment to every one of us.

God had given our first parents a single command, **"You must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die."** Sadly when Satan tempted them to do so, Adam and Eve willingly gave up their holy relationship with their loving heavenly Father for a fantasy. They disobeyed God thinking they could be like him, when in reality, they already perfectly knew his will. So how did God respond?

Adam and Eve had willingly disobeyed him. God could've struck them dead. He could've sent them to hell. He could've destroyed the universe he had created, but he did not. Yes, all creation was cursed and every human being who followed them, including you and me, would have to deal with the effects of sin—pain, grief, toil, sadness, and finally death. Sin would thoroughly ruin all of God's creation. Every man, woman, and child would disregard God's holy will and chase after whatever gratifies our sinful desires. No one would deserve any help or blessing from the true God, but God in his love and grace promised a Savior. He told Satan, **"I will put hostility between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel."** (Genesis 3:15) A Savior would come who would restore the holy relationship between God and us.

The triune God made good on his promise. John tells us more about the **"Word"** who brought life to all things. **"The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth."** (1:14)

The Savior of the world, the second person of the triune God, took on our human flesh and became an infant like you and me for you and me. He was born into poverty for our sake. He grew and lived a perfect life for our sake. By his Word proclaimed, that Savior changes lives as his Holy Spirit creates living faith in the true God where once there were dead, hostile hearts.

The Son of God, however, took on human flesh for another reason—to suffer and die, not for his sins, but for the sins of the whole world—for you and me. In his first letter, John tells us, **"The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work...This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him."** (1 John 3:8, 4:9) By his death, Jesus conquered sin and Satan, and then by his resurrection from the dead, he conquered death. Death no longer held mastery over him or us. What wondrous love we see from the true God—a self-sacrificing, merciful love that only he could show! What wondrous love that moved the triune God to do all that for you and me!

Why does the mystery of the Holy Trinity matter for you and me today? Why does it matter that we see how the triune God created all things for us, provides all things for us, and restores us to a new relationship with him?

That mystery matters for you and me today because in that Holy Trinity, we have life where there was none! We have forgiveness even for those times when we've shunned the true God! We have light amidst the darkness of temptation and death! We once again have rest for our souls.

The triune God powerfully created us, amazingly provides for us, and graciously restores us through the deliverance of Jesus Christ and the life-giving work of the Holy Spirit. Now the triune God calls us to go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in his triune name—in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—and teaching them his Word! Through that water and the Word, God restore that holy relationship our first parents once had with him in paradise, so one day we will join him in paradise.

So what about the mystery? God's Word has shown us who the true God is, but when it comes to wrapping our minds around the mystery of the Trinity, it's impossible. A pastor named Augustine was once walking along a beach puzzling over this very mystery, when he noticed a little boy with a bucket, running back and forth to pour water into a little hole. He asked the boy, "What are you doing?" The boy replied, "I'm trying to put the

ocean into this hole.” Augustine realized he had been trying to put the infinite God into his finite mind. My friends, when it comes to the Trinity, all we can do is simply stand in awe of the glorious mystery of our gracious God and give thanks. To God the Father, who created us, to God the Son, who redeemed us, and to God the Holy Spirit, who sanctifies us, be praise and glory forevermore! Amen.