Invitation to the Table

The Table is spread and ready.

It is the table of company with Jesus—and with all those who love him.

It is the table of sharing with the poor of the world, with whom Jesus identified himself.

It is the table of communion with the earth on which Word became flesh.

So, come to the table, whether you have much faith—or would like to have more; whether you have been to this table often, or haven't been for a long time; whether you have tried to follow Jesus, or have failed.

Come. It is the Table of Grace and it is Christ himself who invites us to meet him here.

Communion Hymn #403, "In Remembrance of Me"

Pastoral Prayer

Creating Father, Redeeming Son, and Sustaining Spirit—you placed stars in the night sky, not like a little boy rolling his marbles across a hardwood floor, but like an artist, placing each one so that, together, they hold each other in place. You etched mountain peaks with your finger and still found time to breathe life into dust and call it all very good. We stand amazed. Awestruck. Humbled.

We confess, Lord, that we've taken your good gift and treated it as if it were our possession. We've paved over gardens, poisoned rivers, and called it "progress."

Forgive our arrogant assumption that this world is ours to use, rather than yours to love and ours to manage; we are stewards, not owners.

But you, O Lord, are relentless in grace.

You didn't stop creating on the sixth day—you're still at it. Still bringing beauty from chaos, light from darkness, and—on a good day—even faith from folks like us.

So, we pray: please, don't stop.

In the name of the One through whom all things were made,

Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

The God We Can't Domesticate![1]

GENESIS 1:1-5 (NRSVUE) *When God began to create the heavens and the earth, 2the earth was complete chaos, and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters. 3Then God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. 4And God saw that the light was good, and God separated the light from the darkness. 5God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.*

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The Word of God for the people of God!

Too often the Genesis creation narratives are a doorway to the culture wars being played out in public school science classes. We get hung up on the details of creation—how and when, while what really is established is the nature of God.

In our binary culture, everything is either right or wrong; black or white with no shades of gray, and the creation stories become either 1) an attempt at exact biblical science, and seen as useless, detrimental myth, or 2) as literal descriptions of creation we must belief and deny any value to science; but the Genesis texts tell a different story: not as a litmus test of faith, but a poem of wonder, awe, and beauty. It's about the "why" of creation, not the "how." Each step of creation is an increasing level of complexity, and at each succeeding level the Genesis account says, "God saw that it was good."

Psalm 8 pushes the theme of awe beyond our microdot planet in the universe:

When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers,
the moon and the stars that you have established;
what are humans that you are mindful of them,
mortals that you care for them?
Yet you have made them a little lower than God
and crowned them with glory and honor.

The Psalmist would be quite at home with TV series like "Cosmos" and "NOVA;" he'd be a fan of Copernicus and Galileo and Isaac Newton and Carl Sagan and Neal DeGrasse Tyson; he'd be awed by the photos from the Webb and Hubble telescopes.

We live in a glorious, good universe in which everything fits together—if we don't get in the way. Note: the Genesis account doesn't say "perfect." Creation's not finished, it's in process, emerging—dare we say evolving? And the sequence of creation in Genesis, when read poetically and imaginatively, parallels scientific theory as each part finds its place. And we're part of this wonderful, dynamic divine tapestry: we're of the earth, yet created in God's image, male and female, to be partners and stewards in God's unending process of creation.

And the real contradiction in any binary approach is the arrogance of believing we're capable of *fully* understanding God—or creation—in the first place. God is the

[1] Much of today's approach is adapted, redirected, and expanded from Bruce Epperly's commentary in Trinity Sunday – Lectionary Commentary For May 31, 2026 | Bruce Epperly

eternal mystery that will not be domesticated. God will not be our lap dog or our genie in a bottle who appears at our command to do our bidding. It is God who calls us to do God's bidding, which turns out to be a better deal, anyway.

God is always embraced in mystery. But there is evidence on which we can build our beliefs. And when our beliefs are strong enough—when we can live as if we truly believe what we say we believe—that's called faith. And it is faith, which, itself, is a gift—not something we earn, but an expression of God's grace—it is faith and not correct doctrine that puts us in right standing with God, with our neighbor, and with ourselves.

So, we're going to look at the creation story, not to prove or disprove the 'Big Bang' theory, but to see what it tells us about the nature and character of God.

First, creation is not an isolated incident—we can't extract it and examine it apart from its context. It begins the sacred Scripture of our faith whose message moves consistently from creation to its completion in the Incarnation. And in between are twists and turns, detours, wild goose chases, but those side trips run out of integrity, while the central message remains consistent from Eden to Bethlehem.

And the first message from creation is that it's not about us: "In in the beginning, God created..." We are Created in the image of the non-binary God. And while we each have a unique mission and purpose, it's part of what Bruce Epperly calls "a larger holy adventure of wisdom and creativity."

This text is actually from last Sunday's Lectionary. Last Sunday was Trinity Sunday... Trinity is a way of describing God's nature and character. The traditional language is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. A more contemporary application is creator, redeemer, and sustainer—less personal but more comprehensive.

This morning I want to follow up on a concept I found hinted in one of the commentaries I read last week. It suggests the Trinity can be understood by Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. I know: it's become a political straw man; but each of those qualities is imbedded in the nature of God and demonstrated in creation.

Start with the diversity of the animal or vegetable kingdoms—no two aardvarks are exactly alike; no two zebras, no two potatoes; no two Oak Trees… Now, add the diversity of human ethnicities and cultures and languages—and gender. While we can't read too much into one phrase, the Genesis creation story implies that purely masculine images of God are incomplete. In God's image, humans are created male and female. God is larger than any human category: God embraces everything in us and much more. And in the diversity that characterizes God we are discovering through genetics that even gender is not a binary, either/or thing but a spectrum of diverse combinations of X and Y chromosomes.

The image of God embraces the full diversity of humanity, endowing every hu-

man with intrinsic value—a truth established in creation and confirmed throughout Scripture to John's vision in Revelation (7:9) of a multitude from "every nation, tribe, people, and language" united in worship, affirming human diversity as one manifestation of the nature of God. Once again, it's not about us!

Or consider the equity manifest in the synergy of creation. Throughout the cosmos, from biological organisms (animal or vegetable) to gas and mineral components, the same fundamental building blocks comprise every part: carbon, energy, the laws of physics. Yet even though we share the same building blocks, rather than an equal distribution of traits, creation exhibits equity through specialization.

Diverse ecosystems and individual species develop distinct abilities suited to their role in the order of things. Equity is about interdependence and cooperation. Resources like sunlight, water, and nutrients are processed and distributed equitably as needed to maintain the equilibrium of the entire system. Once again, it's not about us!

And what may be the most observable and obvious characteristic in this Trinitarian understanding of God—from creation to incarnation—is inclusion. Three world religions, called Abrahamic religions: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, are rooted in the covenant of Abraham recorded in Genesis 12: "Through you all nations of the earth will be blessed." That none of those religions has accomplished the totality of God's intended inclusiveness, God's inclusive nature cannot be denied.

Inclusion is even central to scientific descriptions of the universe: Theoretical Physicist Brian Greene, in his book, *The Elegant Universe*, speaks about "the inclusive, interconnected nature of the cosmos", which he describes in one of my favorite quotes: "We are deeply woven into the fabric of the universe."

From "Let there be light!" through the earth's production of vegetation and animal life to "Let us make mankind in our image," nothing is left out or excluded. Every creature is included. Every creature belongs. Now it's about us.

I see inclusion as a primary demonstration of grace, and grace embraces and defines the full nature and characteristic of God: Father, Son, Holy Spirit; Creator, Redeemer, Sustainer; Diversity, Equity, Inclusion. It's called DEI in the political and, sadly, in the theological configurations that erect walls instead of bridges—you must jump through my hoops *before* you can be included.

It is common to hear, "respect must be earned." As an act of grace, inclusion says, "I will give you my respect. You must earn my disrespect."

Inclusion is an expression of grace; but grace is not permissive. It does not open borders and say, "Come on in!" [nobody on the planet advocates totally open borders]. As an expression of grace, inclusion enables not only entry but a clear path to full and productive participation in the life of the community.

160 years ago, preachers in the south had a verse of Scripture—they had several verses of Scripture—which they used to preach that God approved slavery. So that's what they preached.

Up north, preachers didn't have a verse of Scripture; but they had a sense of the nature and character of God they got from years and years of reading and stringing together the consistent message, from creation to incarnation, about the nature and character of God. So that's what they preached.

And, of course, we know who was right.

Inclusion is not a verse of Scripture. It's the nature and character of God.

As an act of grace, inclusion helps reduce blind spots and echo chambers. Inclusive creators shape environments in which everyone has a genuine opportunity to contribute and flourish. As an act of grace, inclusion challenges harmful behaviors and unhelpful ideologies *without* excluding people.

And *OF COURSE* there are those who try to manipulate grace for their own benefit! But God's response is not to slam the door and exclude everybody because a few abuse grace. God's response is a cross…

Pray with me.