

The Rev. Dustin D. Berg
Calvary Episcopal Church / Kaneohe, Hawaii
1st Sunday after Pentecost (Trinity): 7 June 2020
Genesis 1:1 – 2:4a / Psalm 8 / 2 Corinthians 13:11-13 / Matthew 28:16-20

First of all, I think it's good to acknowledge what a strange position we're in. Back here, in church, in the midst of a pandemic, after nearly 3 months away from one another. We are cautiously taking steps to be back in person, once again, even while we know that for lots of reasons, many of our siblings in Christ are not yet able to join us in person. So, thank you. Whether you join us here in person today, or online, or maybe even read these words later on, thank you. You are the church – and you are important to us here.

Secondly, we are here to give voice to the conflict and unrest in our society. With the killing of George Floyd in Minneapolis now nearly two weeks ago, we have seen violence erupt in all corners of this country, and even around the world. I was explaining some of the events in this country the other night to some colleagues in Finland, and in some ways, they understand the issues we face nearly as well as many of you. Between protests turned violent, law enforcement's role in furthering or curtailing that violence, depending on where you are, to photos and accounts of officers kneeling together with those demonstrating for justice, this is obviously a complicated issue. Systemic racism in the United States, and indeed, elsewhere, is nothing new. And it's high time we take it seriously for the cancer on our society that it's become. Would that all children of God of all races and nationalities and abilities be treated equally and not fear when they venture outside of their homes.

Here in Hawaii, we are blessed with less outward tensions around racial justice than elsewhere, but I promise you it's there (and many of you I'm sure know more than I do). In recent history I think back to the issues surrounding the Mauna Kea 30-meter telescope. Interestingly, I think we have probably *all* been on both the giving and the receiving end of racially motivated actions. And what that says to us is that any of us have the potential for actions that might harm another's personhood.

And then there's the liturgical calendar. Today is Trinity Sunday, which is always the first Sunday after Pentecost. We worship the God who is revealed to us in Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and so we have a Sunday to commemorate that. It's always a bit strange to me – like I'm supposed to try and explain what that all means to you.

Trinity or not, the scriptures appointed for this Sunday actually themselves have a great deal to speak to our world – this world, today. They are about the created world and about redemption, about the honor of our own personhood and about being sent forth by God.

We heard the poetic story of creation from the very beginning. We heard the repeated cadence "And God saw that it was good." The cosmos, the earth and sea, birds, cattle, creeping things... The variety of creation, I think, should astound us. And God calls it all "good". In fact, at the end, "God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good." In other words, the

diversity of plant and animal life, the seas, and human beings themselves, make up the work and the glory of God revealed. Let me say it again: the glory of God, the image and likeness of the creator himself, is imprinted on the created world – and especially upon us as human beings. We are given that stamp of the divine in order that we might live in its blessing. God made male and female, in God’s image and likeness, and extended to us a share in tending and ordering the very world that God made. Diversity and variety are part of the fabric of creation itself, and we are meant to tend it.

Our psalm echoes that blessedness. Of humans exercising their place in creation, the psalm writer puts it: You have made [humans] but little lower than the angels; *you adorn [them] with glory and honor; You give [them] mastery over the works of your hands; * you put all things under [their] feet.

For us as humans, we are to tend to the flourishing of God’s created world. The world itself, of course, but most especially, the ways we honor and care for one another. The ways we honor one another imply our belief that God does, indeed, create us for goodness. God desires our flourishing, and the flourishing of all of humankind. In fact, as the 2nd century Irenaeus of Lyons said, “the glory of God is a human being fully alive”. Living into one’s God-ordained blessedness.

So when I read Jesus’s words to his disciples, that rag-tag band of followers who were rich and poor, fishermen, traders, and the larger band of his followers, I read them in light of that blessedness of creation that is to be carried forth in the name of Jesus. In other words, because of who we are, and because of who God is, we are to be agents of change and redemption and hope. In the name of Jesus, we are to bring others into the fold, teaching them the ways of this radical, justice-seeking, redeeming and creation-honoring way. In the name of Jesus, we are to carry within ourselves the hope for not just tolerating the diversity of creation and of humankind, but embracing and celebrating it. In the name of Jesus, we are to seek the ways of acting and being in the world that “strive for justice and peace among all people, and [that] respect the dignity of every human being” – according to our own Baptismal Covenant.

All of that is to say that we have work to do. We have work to do before we achieve justice for all. We have work to do in order to make the disciples of Jesus that are also justice seeking. We have work to do so that even in our own communities, we strive for that human being fully alive: fed, clothed, taught, respected.

This could look like seeking out if there are needs of food or clothing for persons right outside Calvary’s front door here in Kaneohe. It could look like reaching across difference of race or background or education to lift up the experience of persons in different stages of life. It could look like offering up our space should there be a community need we could meet.

But at the end of the day, we need to do more – practice more – be more – of the ways of justice and peace in our world and in our communities. The very fabric of creation depends on it, and our calling as the followers of Jesus depend on it. God’s creation has already set it in place. Made in God’s image – to share in God’s work.