

Reader 1: In the beginning there was God... and a mess.
And it was a real mess.
You couldn't see anything.

Reader 2: Things could bump into you and
you would bump into them all the time.

Reader 1: There were icky, gooey things,
and soft things,
and hard things,
and sharp, prickly things — Ouch! —

Reader 1: and everything was bumping into everything all the time,
because you couldn't see anything,
because there wasn't any light.
Just the mess. And God.

Reader 2: Some people call a mess like that “chaos.”
I just call it a mess.

Reader 1: Then God did something about the mess.

Reader 2: God started talking.

Reader 1: God said, “Turn on, light!”
And light turned on.
And when light turned on, you could tell light from dark,
and you could start to make out colors, so you could see the mess for
all it was, everything, all jumbled up.

Reader 2: There was water, and rocks, and clouds,
and sand, and fire, and glass,
all jumbled up.
You could see the mess.
And so could God.

Reader 1: So God kept talking.
And the more God talked, the more unjumbled things became.

Reader 2: Clouds rose, water fell and gathered into streams and lakes,
sand and smaller rocks dotted their shores,
while bigger rocks became land and hills and mountains,
and fire moved under the rocks.

Reader 1: And God kept talking.
And the unjumbled jumble began to dance
with all kinds of life.

Reader 2: Life in the waters, life on the land and hills and mountains,
life in the ground, and life above in the skies.

Reader 1: Everything was dancing with all kinds of life.
There was green life covering the land, swimming life in the waters,
bobbing life, hopping life, standing life, wriggling life, flying life,
walking life, running life — life watching life, everywhere life.

Reader 2: And God kept talking.
And there was one more kind of life
that started dancing.
And when this kind came,
our kind of life,
we did more than dance.
We started talking, too,

Reader 1: kind of like God was talking,
getting the jumble out of the mess,
and making more room for more life to dance.

Reader 2: And when God saw us start talking,
kind of like God was talking,
God said,

Reader 1&2: “This is very good.”

Being One in Mission

Video link:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8wYXw4K0A3g&oref=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.youtube.com%2Fwatch%3Fv%3D8wYXw4K0A3g&has_verified=1

What did you see happening in that video?

You saw people with extremely different viewpoints come together to accomplish something, in this case it was constructing a bar. And what those people discovered. And they didn't know just how different their viewpoints were when they came together, but they soon discovered how different they were. But through working together, and having a few brief conversations – and of course having a cold beer together – they were able to form a friendship. I find that fascinating, that the force that draws us together is stronger than all the forces that would split us apart.

Isn't that a beautiful thing? Something about our God-given DNA actually draws us to one another. No, it's not the Heineken that makes that happen; it is the fact that we are beautifully and wonderfully made in the image of God, and yes, my brothers and sisters, that is VERY good.

And when I say that we are formed in the image of God, I mean in the image a Triune God. Here we are on Trinity Sunday, which is a Sunday that I used to HATE, because I dreaded the thought of trying to explain this FATHER-SON-HOLY GHOST TRIO to the congregation without either boring you to death of confusing you beyond measure ... and most likely confusing *myself* beyond

measure in the process. But I thank Heineken for helping me make one simple point about our Triune God and that point is that God himself is a community of love. Not three Gods but three persons of the One Godhead that are bound together in love as they are bound together in mission.

That's right, friends; God is bound together in mission. God the Father whose perfect will is carried out by his perfect Son whose desire is only to please the Father. And the Son fulfills the mission of the Father not only by remaining faithful even through humiliation and suffering and death, but also by sending the Holy Spirit, so that the perfect will of the Father would be perfectly carried out on earth as it is in heaven. Each person requires the others to carry out the perfect will of the eternal Godhead. And so one way we can understand God on this Trinity Sunday is a perfect community of three.

Now all of that is very nice, that God gets along quite well with himself, but that's not so helpful to us, is it? Here we are in a world that is nowhere near a perfect community. Even little communities are not perfect communities. Families are not perfect families. I would wager that over the course of this past week **most** of you have had some unpleasant encounter with another person; maybe it occurred while you were on the checkout line at Shop Rite. Maybe it was much closer to home, or so close as to actually be *in* your home. The forces that tear us apart and pit us against one another seem to be the stronger forces at play in our world, the forces that cause us to *hate* one another rather than love. The forces that isolate us from others, that cause us to see things only *my* way and consider anyone who disagrees with me to be an idiot, the forces that lead us to shun what is foreign by seeking refuge among what is familiar continue to spawn distrust and prejudice. The forces that lead us to think in terms of personal comfort, health, and safety in our own lifetime seem to have a stronger pull on us than the forces that lead us to consider the long-term comfort, health, and safety of the planet and our human race. This world is a long way from embodying the kind of love that is at play in the Trinity. We humans hardly seem to work cooperatively in mission let alone agree on what our mission should be. From whence does our hope come from, we who are so prone to discord, so prone to forfeit our children's inheritance for our own pleasure? From whence does our hope come?

Well I'm glad you asked me, because our hope is built of Jesus Christ, and by now I think you know what I mean by that. I don't mean that Jesus dies so that on Judgment Day all our sins past, present, and future are wiped out and we can go to heaven; it's an insult to God for us to think that his plan is so small. This is the God who created the universe, billions and billions of galaxies each containing billions and billions of suns, and God just wants to remove us from the created order?

No, belief in Jesus is not so trite as to be a way to escape the world. Belief in Jesus is belief in what God is doing and will continue to do right here in our world. We just read a fun translation of the first chapter of Genesis, and in that account we see that God called all that he created *very good*. That includes *us*. Not just pastors, and not just Christians, but *humanity* in general. All people are beautifully and wonderfully made. Unfortunately we have stopped being grateful to God. Even Christians have gotten in the habit of complaining to God and blaming God for all that is wrong in their lives. We have rebelled against God, choosing instead to try to be our own gods, and that has made a huge mess of things.

Jesus started the repair work. He began by showing us what the Kingdom of God looks like – a Kingdom of love, of healing, of joy and peace. His death on a cross demonstrates that his love knows no limit (“what greater love is there than this; that a friend lays down his life for those he loves” and actually Jesus shows a greater love than this because he lays down his life for those who would consider him their *enemy*. His Resurrection bears witness to God’s victory over the power of sin and death – it shows that God’s love cannot be defeated, even by death. And he sent us the Holy Spirit so that we would not only have God’s abundant presence within us but that we would also have God’s abundant presence acting in the world around us – a presence that can be seen in acts of love that work to bring peace between individuals and nations, and justice to the downtrodden and marginalized, a Spirit that brings God’s glorious kingdom not only into our lives but into our homes and communities – one thing that our bishop told all the pastors who had been assigned; he said, “I’m not sending you to a church; I’m sending you to a community. Go and do God’s work in and around you. Minister to your people, but know that your people are not merely the people who dwell inside that building that we call a church; your people include the folks of Tottenville and Eltingville, of Bay Ridge and Richmond Terrace, of Tompkinsville and Annadale, of Staten Island and Manhattan Island, of New York and of Furcy in Haiti.” (He didn’t actually say all of that, but he meant it). And friends, there is work to be done in all of those places I’ve mentioned, just as there is work to be done in our own hearts. And the Spirit of God at work within us translates into the Spirit of God at work around us a tireless Spirit that is forever bringing change to a very broken world.

I could go on, but I won’t. I returned from a three hour worship service on Friday and another one on Saturday morning, a four day conference of twelve-hour workdays, and a lot was accomplished, and the Spirit was at work. I plan to give you a formal rundown of what happened at Annual Conference on July 2nd during social hour, and then again on July 23rd, after I return from Haiti and have had a chance to share about the mission trip. But to re-cap my message to you this morning; **we are united in mission not because we all see things the same way, but because the Spirit of God binds us together in love. It’s a spirit that builds order out of chaos, fixes what is broken. So, my friends, pray fervently for that Spirit to work within you, that you as an individual, and that we as a**

church, would shine the light of God's love around us, bringing hope to those who see none, peace to those who have none, justice to those who experience none. May it be so, according to God's perfect will. Amen.