

# Sermons at Christ Church

## *Building Relationships through Love.*

*Trinity Sunday*  
*Rev. Emmanuel Mercer*

In the beginning, before God did anything, the earth was formless, void and dark. But then God created. God made something out of what was formless, void and dark. God created a living world.

The creation story in Genesis takes us back in time. Sometimes I get chills when I read it because it feels to me that I am a participant in the story, or at least a keen observer to what God was doing each day. I look around me, I see you and the trees, and the greens and the deer and I am glad that God created everything that we see around us. At the end of each day of creation, God declared that it was good. Creation was good. You are good.

But all that which was good was corrupted, not by God, but by the living beings who were part of creation and who were offered the sacred responsibility as stewards of the new creation. The living beings did not only corrupt God's creation, but they corrupted themselves as well.

We relapsed into the old being and so lives which are formless, void and dark, has always shaped our world, and these have led us to create a world of differences, separation and death. Life has suffocated both the rich and the poor, the slave and the free, the Jew and the Gentile, the circumcised and the uncircumcised. And every one of us has built a silo in which we can comfortably live with members of our own tribe. We look at ourselves and our situation through our tribal lens thinking that our salvation depends solely on the extent to which we project our tribal allegiance and domination of others.

But if we are to learn anything of value about the Trinity, it is the fact that it is insufficient to only save you or members of your tribe-be it Jew or Gentile. It is inadequate to operate as a disciple among only your tribesmen and women. To reflect the new creation, the new being and our new reality, we must participate in life outside of our comfort zones, outside our tribal zones.

And that is the one unique claim that discipleship makes on us.

Jesus doesn't invite us to be Christian, nor does he invite us to be Episcopalians, Roman Catholics, Baptists or Methodists, he simply invites us into discipleship.

This is what you must know about disciples, they sit at the feet of the teacher and listen, study and more importantly walk on a particular path which always leads to renewal.

Each disciple knows that the path isn't easy, but the disciple walks the path anyways because the disciple understands the claim that has been made on his or her life.

A claim has been made on our lives as disciples, and it is that the God who first created the world is the same God who through Jesus Christ makes us a new creation. This new creation is very different from the old creation.

The new creation is not something that simply takes the place of the old, the new doesn't replace the old. The new is a renewal of the old which has been corrupted, distorted, split and almost destroyed. Remember this, salvation does not destroy creation; rather it transforms the old creation into a new one.

The marching orders which make this transformation possible is this *"Go and make disciples of all nations baptizing them in the name of the father and of the son and of the holy spirit."* Baptizing all those who embrace this new claim on their lives in the name of the trinity.

A few days ago, I received an email from a parent who was interested in baptism for their daughter. But then they said that they have a problem affirming the doctrinal beliefs. They have made a request to different churches with the hope that they can get their daughter baptized but each church said no-At least they were honest about that. They are reaching out to us to consider the possibility of baptizing the daughter.

I was initially surprised by the request. This is what I said to myself, if you don't subscribe to the doctrinal beliefs, why bother? Why do you want to get your daughter baptized? But then upon much deeper reflection, I asked myself, is it the parents who are getting baptized or the daughter? So, what if a mixed couple of Christian and Jewish faith tradition or Christian and Islamic faith tradition come for baptism, would we require that both parents be baptized professing Christians before the child is baptized or would we require that the parents expressly state their belief in the doctrines of the church before their child is baptized. I reached out to Mother Marcia about it, we talked about it

and then decided that we should go ahead with the baptism. But before Baptism, they should take the baptismal class which everyone is required to take.

Should the baptism occur, we will not baptize the little girl into a religion. Like all of us, we will baptize her into discipleship, because disciples make new creation possible, and disciples speak of the new creation in threefold: 1. reconciliation, 2. reunion and 3. resurrection.

Be reconciled to God, Paul encourages us. This means that there is recognition of a broken relationship. But we don't have to be hostile to God because we believe that God didn't meet our expectation or because of our own belief that we are not worthy of God's grace. God is never hostile to us. God is always ready to welcome us with outstretched arms. Being reconciled to God also means being reconciled to ourselves. We don't have to reject ourselves because of our past failures and indiscretions, to reject ourselves is to reject the God who first created us and also to reject each other. Being reconciled with God also means be reconciled with others. And that means that we each have the capacity within ourselves to find as much grace within ourselves to be able to share that grace with others.

Being reconciled to God is the first mark of the new creation, the new being and the new reality. And it is reconciliation makes reunion possible.

Second, a new creation is the reality in which the separated is reunited. In Christ, the separation between the Father, Son and Holy Spirit did not overcome or undermine the unity between Christ and God, between Christ and humankind, and between Christ and himself.

In Christ therefore, we look at a human life that maintained the union between himself and the Father, in spite of everything that drove him into separation from God. Jesus Christ represents for us the power of an undisrupted union between Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

For this reason, wherever there is a new creation, there you will find a disciple who is not only united with the God, the ground and meaning of human existence, but the disciple is united with one another.

Within this new creation, a disciple has the astonishing experience of feeling reunited with oneself, not in pride and false self-satisfaction, but in a deep self-acceptance as someone who is eternally important, eternally loved and eternally accepted.

The new creation brings about healing because it does not only create reunion with oneself, but it creates reunion with others.

It is through this reunion that we can live peaceably with each other because the separation among all of creation has been conquered by the power of reunion. That is why Paul argues that “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.”

If the church which is the assembly of God would have any significance, this is the significance: that right here the reunion of all peoples is pronounced, confessed and realized, even if it is weak or fragmented.

It is unfortunate that the church, like all its members, relapses from the new into the old being. That is why the third mark of the new creation is resurrection.

Resurrection means the victory of the new state of things, the new being which is born out of the death of the old. Resurrection is about the phoenix which rises from the ashes of the old.

Resurrection is not an event that might happen in some remote future, but it is the power of the new being to create life out of death, so that wherever there is a new being, there is resurrection, wherever there is a disciple, there is the possibility of new life.

I believe that the idea of Trinity expands and challenges our imagination to see new life and new possibilities. Trinity is about how we can dream. It is about how we can participate in the life of God in a way which brings God a little closer to each other, makes God a little more accessible and makes God a little relatable.

And so, if in the future, we baptize this little girl, it wouldn't mean that we have it right and others have it wrong, it would simply mean that we seized an opportunity for a new creation, new life and a new reality where others did not.

If the Trinity can bring about new life, new creation and a new being, then as disciples who believe in the resurrection of Jesus the Christ, we can new forth new life, new creation, new reality out of the formless, void and dark places of our world.

**Amen.**