

June 7, 2020

The Beginning

Shepherd's Grace Church

Welcome—This is a youth service and also our first Sunday back from “Shelter in Place”. Because of both of these things, I am sharing the entire service as our on-line post. Often with youth, the message is a little shorter because they read it as I have written it. Today, however, in honor of our substantial experience with Zoom conferencing, the youth are going to call in via Zoom and ask questions which I will attempt to answer as the message for this morning.

In addition, this is Trinity Sunday, a special celebration of the Church and an acknowledgement of God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. This will be celebrated as a part of our message this morning in an attempt to help members of the congregation understand how God can be three in one!

Finally, this is a weekend of grave commemoration for people of faith and people of social concern in our nation. Systemic racism has once again reared its ugly head in our country. George Floyd was murdered in Minnesota and by police and the reality of that event has cast a shadow on the freedoms some of us enjoy and many are denied in the name of privilege. We hope you will find encouragement, acknowledgement and a sense of “new beginning” in the service this morning.

Sharing Joys and Concerns

Praise and Worship

Prayer in Unison

Children's Time—

Presenter—Will the children of the congregation please come forward?

Good Morning—it feels good to be back in the sanctuary today. Did you guys miss church? (Wait for some answers) How many of you watched church on FaceBook? (Wait for answers) Did any of you see Pastor Jack last week when he ate the Jalapeno? I thought he was going to choke on it!

Presenter—Anyway, it feels good to be back in church today. Someone is going to read a passage of scripture in just a few minutes that says we don't

get to stay here long. It says we are supposed to go out into the world. Are you guys ready to go out into the world?

What would you do if you went out? (Wait for answers)

Well, Jesus tells us what we are supposed to do when we go out. We are supposed to tell other people about Him. When you guys go out today, who will you tell about Jesus? (Wait for answers) What will you tell them? (Wait for answers)

I will tell them all about His love and how He is always with me in my heart. I hope you will tell them something about that too.

Let's pray. Dear God, we have been away for a long time and now we have to go away again. This time it won't be for long but it will be for You. Help us to share how special Jesus is for us and how much we love Him. We want others to know him too and the only way that can happen is if we tell them. Help us go tell them. In Jesus name we pray. Amen!

Scripture Reading—Matthew 28: 16-20

¹⁶Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. ¹⁷When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. ¹⁸And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

Hymn of Preparation

Pastoral Prayer—Pastor Jack and One Youth

Pastor—Gracious God, we are grateful to be back together this morning. We are more than grateful for the chance we have to Worship You! For the past several weeks, we have been separated by miles. These miles could not keep us from being connected through You and we thank you today for your guidance, your faithfulness, and your fulfillment of a promise you made to us...that you would never leave us, or forsake us or abandon us!

Youth—Dear God, we thank you that we can stand next to our friends and families today! We love to worship and we love to worship together. We

thank you for our Facebook friends who cannot be with us in this place but are with us as they watch and worship in Your presence!

Pastor—We come to you this morning a new sense of mission, Lord! Now...while we stand together, brothers and sisters stand apart and divided. Our nation, this part of our nation and all other parts as well are deeply saddened and grief stricken at the blatant and brutal acts of racial violence that have broken out in our nation these past several days. Racism is a crime against humanity, Lord and you have told us in scripture that all of us are your children and all are worthy of your love, your care, your salvation! In this time of prayer, we ask that you come to us, heal us and forgive us for any actions we might have committed whether knowingly or unknowingly against any other person.

Youth—God, help us to grow in our lives and to learn that there are many colors in your rainbow and that each of them is spectacular! Let us learn that color, each color adds to the beauty of creation and is intended to make our differences even more beautiful. In our lives let us learn to love difference and respect one another for the beauty we see in each other.

Pastor—God, today there are many who are hurting. There are many who are in need of your message of love. Let us be the messengers this morning and let us be the channel of your peace. We know that there are many who are in far away places this morning seeking to preserve and restore that peace. They have put themselves in danger for us. They do not all look like us but they all stand with us, separated only by miles but standing together in our hearts. Keep them safe today. Return them home safely to us and let us rejoice at their safe return, giving you all the praise, the honor and the glory.

Youth—There are others, God who do not have the same experiences we have. We cannot always understand their reactions or appreciate the things that seem to separate us. They think of us as enemies. Sometimes we think of them as enemies. Today, Lord we pray for our enemies. Keep them safe and let us learn somehow, some way to listen to one another and begin to understand our differences.

Pastor—Then, Lord, after we have listened to one another, let us listen to you. Come to us and take us to a place you have chosen. There, teach us to lay down our weapons and join together our arms. Arm in arm, lead us to the top of your holy mountain where we can listen to you.

Together—Then teach us about peace. Teach us about love. Let us beat our swords into ploughshares and our spears into pruning hooks. Teach us never to hate or hurt anymore. This we pray through the power of Your Holy Spirit and in Jesus' name.

(Say Lord's Prayer)

Offering and Doxology

Scripture—Genesis 1: 1-2: 4 (See Above)

In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, ²the earth was a formless void 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.

⁶And God said, "Let there be a dome in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters." ⁷So God made the dome and separated the waters that were under the dome from the waters that were above the dome. And it was so. ⁸God called the dome Sky. And there was evening and there was morning, the second day.

⁹And God said, "Let the waters under the sky be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear." And it was so. ¹⁰God called the dry land Earth, and the waters that were gathered together he called Seas. And God saw that it was good. ¹¹Then God said, "Let the earth put forth vegetation: plants yielding seed, and fruit trees of every kind on earth that bear fruit with the seed in it." And it was so. ¹²The earth brought forth vegetation: plants yielding seed of every kind, and trees of every kind bearing fruit with the seed in it. And God saw that it was good. ¹³And there was evening and there was morning, the third day.

¹⁴And God said, "Let there be lights in the dome of the sky to separate the day from the night; and let them be for signs and for seasons and for days and years, ¹⁵and let them be lights in the dome of the sky to give light upon the earth." And it was so. ¹⁶God made the two great lights—the greater light to

rule the day and the lesser light to rule the night—and the stars. ¹⁷God set them in the dome of the sky to give light upon the earth, ¹⁸to rule over the day and over the night, and to separate the light from the darkness. And God saw that it was good. ¹⁹And there was evening and there was morning, the fourth day.

²⁰And God said, “Let the waters bring forth swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the dome of the sky.” ²¹So God created the great sea monsters and every living creature that moves, of every kind, with which the waters swarm, and every winged bird of every kind. And God saw that it was good. ²²God blessed them, saying, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth.” ²³And there was evening and there was morning, the fifth day.

²⁴And God said, “Let the earth bring forth living creatures of every kind: cattle and creeping things and wild animals of the earth of every kind.” And it was so. ²⁵God made the wild animals of the earth of every kind, and the cattle of every kind, and everything that creeps upon the ground of every kind. And God saw that it was good.

²⁶Then God said, “Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.” ²⁷So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. ²⁸God blessed them, and God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.”

²⁹God said, “See, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit; you shall have them for food. ³⁰And to every beast of the earth, and to every bird of the air, and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food.” And it was so.

³¹God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.

2 Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all their multitude. ²And on the seventh day God finished the work that he had done, and he rested on

the seventh day from all the work that he had done. ³So God blessed the seventh day and hallowed it, because on it God rested from all the work that he had done in creation.

⁴These are the generations of the heavens and the earth when they were created. In the day that the LORD God made the earth and the heavens, (Genesis 1: 1-2: 4)

Message—The Beginning

Participants—Chance, Bailee, Hadley, Shae, Lauren, Aidan, Heather, Chris, Shelly, Dana, Pastor Jack

Format—Zoom (If it can work) Each person will call in from the fellowship hall. The congregation will see you on the screen and will watch as participation grows. Participant Questions will be directed to Pastor Jack who will share answers from our Genesis 1 Bible Study and invite Zoom.

Heather, Dana, Shelly and Chris will remain with the congregation and will ask questions as they choose in order to clarify Pastor Jack's Response. Because of the events of this week, some of Pastor's response will be motivated by the need we have to recognize that we must all learn to work together.

Question 1— (Hadley)Who wrote all these things down if no one was there but God?

Early on, there was no one on the earth except Adam and Eve. God came to walk with Adam in the cool of the day as scripture tells us and God shared much with Adam. From what we know, Adam shared all these things with Eve. In the Garden, when Eve is tempted by the serpent, she repeats some of what Adam has told her to the serpent in order to try to resist his temptation. Even though this resistance is unsuccessful, Adam and Eve remember all the things God taught them, and they pass this story down to their children later so they will know that there is only one true God.

As time passes, all generations learn about God in what is referred to as an Oral tradition. The families share the story as it has been shared with them so that their children will know of God's power and of God's compassion for all people. Some people chose to believe the story, others chose to take from the abundance God provided even more than their share.

As time went on, there were two stories; the first was God's story and the second was the story of human greed.

Eventually, God chose to cut off the human story and continue God's story with Noah. After the flood which God created, there was only one story left. It was God's story and it went forward with God's chosen people through slavery and famine, through abundance and obedience to a point in time where, in exile and slavery the people of God wrote the story down.

Your question was who wrote the story. The truth is that God wrote the story and it is His story to tell and to guide. It is however a story of "The Beginning" and a beginning that has begun over and over again with each person and each generation. It is "The Beginning" of a relationship that sustains God's people and continues to remind us that it is God's story to tell. God writes it and God writes it on our hearts.

Question 2—(Chance) What does it mean that creation began in the beginning and in the dark?

Have you ever thought about when a project really begins? Does a building get its start when the first shovel of dirt is turned? Does a new vaccine for Covid begin with the mixing of chemicals? The truth is that all beginnings have their start as an idea; an idea that is but a spark, a random thought that gains intensity until it explodes into existence. That explosion is "The Beginning." It occurs outside the physical realm of our existence and becomes the very nucleus of virtually every accomplishment.

To say that a beginning of a project occurs outside the physical realm is to say that it occurs apart from the earthly elements necessary for its completion. To complete the thought is to say that all ideas begin outside of time and space as energy that invites completion.

When we say that creation is in the beginning, we are saying that the creator has an idea and this idea is the nexus for that which is to become. It starts "in the beginning" and outside of time. It breaks into time when the idea is fully formed and ready to be revealed. A guy by the name of Ted Peters calls this a prolepsis, a breaking into the present that reveals something that is promised in the future.

When we say that God works in the beginning, we are saying that God has an idea that is fully formed and yet still out of time. At the beginning, time starts and God breaks in as the creator. His idea, revealed in the present becomes a

reality in the future...a future not too long from now; perhaps as near as a heartbeat or even our next breath.

When we say that God works in the dark, we say that ideas and imaginations all start in places that are unseen. God began working on the notion of creation in the dark because there was no light. In this case, to say that God works on creation in the dark is to state the obvious.

To say more, however is to remember that all work and every idea begins in the darkness of our intelligence. We too, work in the dark before we work in the light. We turn ideas over and over again in our minds before we ever pound a nail or measure a cup of flower.

In verse five of the first chapter of Genesis we learn that there was evening and then there was morning on the first day. Time begins with the dark and moves to the light just as every other element of creation. God works in the dark because God is logical and well organized. He works in such a way as to maximize His results.

As humans, we often get into trouble because we do not start in the darkness. We begin with the materials we have instead of imagining and thinking about what we will need to complete a project. As a result, our outcome is often not what we want. In the last several weeks, we have experienced something similar to this with the Covid virus.

We learned that the virus started in China and immediately we shut down travel between the United States and China. In the light of day, that was an excellent decision and likely prevented several cases of the virus coming to the United States.

What we did not imagine, however is that the virus was not just spread to people from China or the United States. As a result, the virus was spread to Europe by travelers who spread the virus to people traveling to the United States and major outbreaks of the virus were spread to the East Coast of the United States by people coming, not from China but from other countries.

When we recognize that working in the dark, thinking before we act, planning and organizing are essential parts of creating, we can do amazing things. Part of what God wants us to know from the creation story is that because we are created in God's image and likeness, we have a similar capacity for creating and for organizing in the way that God does.

Important in understanding this is understanding that God does not call us to be reactionary, but responsible. Days start in the darkness so we can pursue the light. They start in the darkness so we can plan and explore from the recesses of our mind so that when we begin to see the light, we can see that it is good!

Follow-Up—Does God still work in the beginning?

Ted Peters, the guy I mentioned a little bit ago explains that this working in the present to reveal the future is exactly how we can understand God's work in our world. God works outside of time continually bringing God's plan to reality in creation. God then breaks in to time in a present moment setting in place events or using events to reveal the goodness that will come about in the future.

God did not plan or design the events of the past few weeks and plan to take the life of George Floyd in Minnesota. I believe God does not bring about catastrophe or evil. God is not capable of that.

Where evil exists, however, God will use the events of that evil to bring about the Good God intends to introduce to the world. The good that has been re-introduced in the events of these past few weeks is the reality of systemic racism and the effects it has on all segments of our lives as humans.

In this moment and in this place and in places like this all over the world, God is revealing to us this morning the promise that we as Americans do hold dear. All people, we say in our founding documents are created equal and all have the right to pursue life, liberty and happiness. These are rights not enumerated in the constitution, but as our founding fathers say, are rights given by our creator.

God, working in the darkness of this moment and outside of time is revealing to us through the recent events that we must all stand for one another, regardless of our skin color, our gender, our economic status or our sexual orientation.

God is still working in the beginning. God is working outside of time to reveal to us in the very present of this morning a reality that we can and will live in to in the future. It is this reality that Matthew is calling us to this morning in the passage of scripture we shared earlier.

We are to gather together today and then go out and tell the good news to all people and all nations, claiming them for God and claiming them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Question 3—(Shae) Why are we talking about the work of God on Trinity Sunday?

We talk about How God works by attempting to define God in ways that can help us understand. The Trinity is not anything specifically mentioned in the Bible. There is no place there where we can learn from God specifically that God is three persons in one being.

Still, passages like the one we read in Matthew today do help us understand God better. God likes it when we pursue Him and try to understand him. It took almost three hundred years after the death of Jesus for people who read and study all the time about God to get to the place where they could begin to write down how they thought about God. They had the life and work of Jesus to guide them but it still took them a long time to come to an understanding.

Once they started writing, they were surprised to see their evidence revealed throughout scripture. Frankly, I wonder why they were so surprised. IF they understood and believed as I do and as I said earlier, God wrote the whole book. It is not surprising at all that God would be consistent in God's writing.

We see it revealed to us even in the first few verses of the passage Aidan read to us today. Because we are looking for it we see it and so we must talk about the ways God works as we celebrate God on Trinity Sunday.

Look at the scripture and think in the very darkness of your mind. In the darkness God plans to reveal Godself to you. In the beginning!

Before time started, the Spirit of God hovered above the face of the deep. Now, you have to know a little Hebrew here so I am going to ask you to trust me. If you want to check out what I am about to share, I can send you to a couple of websites on the internet or I can point you to more than a few books in my library to let you know that what I am sharing is accurate.

In Hebrew, the word spirit has three meanings. First is just as it is written. In Hebrew, the spirit is life. The very life, the power of God hovered above the face of the deep. Another word for spirit is wind. Some translations of the Bible use this word instead of spirit to show what was hovering above the

chaos that existed before creation. The third word is breath. Read here that the breath of God hovers above the face of the deep.

Now, remember who it is that we are thinking about. This is God, of whom we are speaking so the words we use to describe in this case should be capitalized. In the Bible they are. The reference is either to the Spirit or the Wind or to the Breath of God hovering above the face of the deep.

Before time begins, all of this is chaos. It is a void, a vast nothingness. There is nothing present except God. God's spirit is present and in the very next verse, we learn that God the Son is present as well.

In the midst of the chaos, God's idea for creation has become complete and for the very first time, God is about to reveal it. As the Spirit hovers, God speaks. Speech involves words. Of necessity, speech involves words but God's word is something special.

If you were to look in a Bible this morning, or anytime you choose, (The words do not change!) and look at John 1 you will see the power and the person of God's word. "In the beginning was the word and the word was with God and the Word was God. The Word was with God in the beginning and through the Word, all things came into being and with out the word, not one thing came into being.

And then if you read on a little farther, you will see in verse 14 that "The Word became flesh and dwelt among us," as Jesus.

So, you see, when we unpack the creation story, thinking about the work of hundreds of years to understand who Jesus is, we come to understand that God the Father or creator, the Son or Word, the Holy Spirit or Wind or Breath of God are present in the beginning and are revealed to us in the first few verses of the Bible as part of the story of creation God wants us to know.

We talk about the work of God on Trinity Sunday so we can remember and celebrate what we know about how God works in our world, as One Being with three separate and distinct attributes, Creator, Redeemer and Sustainer.

Follow-up—Why doesn't God tell the writers about Trinity specifically instead of making it a mystery?

Again, there is no mention in the Bible as to why God does not specifically mention the Trinity but I believe the answer lies in God's desire to have a

deeper and more special relationship with us. We learn from scripture that God wants us to seek Him while he can be found. God wants us to search for Him. God wants us to long for Him. I think the reason God does not give us all the answers is so we can work from the darkness of our own minds into the light of reality and affirm for ourselves that there is only one true God, the maker of the heavens and the earth.

This is an important part of our understanding of the creation story. By the time humans sat down to write the story on paper, they were captives in Babylon, a city and culture that practice the worship of many gods. The leaders of the people wanted to frame their writing of the creation story as a reminder to the Hebrew people that creation and God's plan for God's people were the design of one and not of many.

God wants us to recognize that we are special to him and He wants us to know that He is special to us.

Question 4—(Lauren)Is there a reason for the order of creation?

Another thing God wants us to know about the creation story is that God is a logical and organized Being. As God thought about the plan for creation he realized that he could not bring darkness out of light, it had to be the other way around. Up to this point light did not exist. As a reminder, the scripture defines the starting point for each day as the evening time so that we will always know logically that light comes from darkness and not the other way around.

Additionally, God wanted people to see the intelligence and organization behind creation. As God described the events of creation, God wants us to have the logic be apparent. Before God created animals, first God separated the water from heaven from the water on the earth. He created the sky. Then God separated water from dry land. In God's plan, there would be some creatures that lived in the sea but not all. Separation was necessary and was necessary before any of the creatures were created.

Then God created the lights of the heavens, stars and other planets and especially the sun. The sun, the great light as it is referred to in the creation story was essential because it provided a point of reference for what was to come. It brought warmth to the earth but also a sense of order to the seasons and days of time. It gave periods of seasons and years.

When and only when the seasons were established, God brought forth vegetation. God knew that growth could not take place without the seasons. Around here, we know that we plant wheat in the late fall but we do not harvest it until the summer. These laws of reproduction are a part of the creation story and they demonstrate God's organization and intellect. It is for this reason that God is referred to as an Intelligent Designer. His plan was carefully thought through and was flawless in its implementation.

Once the seasons and the vegetation were in place, then, God could bring forth the living creatures; first the creatures of the sea and then the creatures of dry land.

There was indeed an order to creation and there is a purpose to that order. Reading carefully the story reveals to us even more clearly who God is and the power God has.

Follow-up—Is this revelation supposed to be a history?

The story of "the beginning" is not supposed to be so much an accounting of time with dates and calendars as it is in fact a revelation. The revelation, however is not about events as much as it is about who God is. As we read the story, we could get caught up in seven days as the story suggests but if we focus on this, we miss the real point to the story.

God wants us to know at least four things about Him. First, God is the one true God and is the creator of heaven and earth. Given the condition and location of the people who wrote this story down, that they were slaves living in exile this information is essential.

In Babylon in the days of their captivity there were many gods and temples to their service. These many gods had varying degrees of strength and power. There was a different god for each purpose. God wanted the Hebrew people to know that there is only one God and that God alone has the power to bring about creation.

From a place in slavery, the Hebrew people could cling to faith in this God alone as one who could bring them to a salvation from slavery.

It occurs to me this week that many who are protesting systemic racism and unequal treatment would also want to hear this message. They, along with we would be well served to know that God is in control of God's creation story. It

is to Him that all people should bend and knee and bow a head and give praise.

Part of the creation story is that all of creation reflects God's glory. If we read the story as a history, we read it as a story of dominance of people over other people. This necessarily invites attitudes of superiority! Histories, after all are written by the winners. The unique position of the people who sit down to write the creation story is that they write as people subjugated into slavery. Perhaps the only great literary work in all of creation is the Biblical story because it is written not as a history but as an invitation to all people to look past differences and recognize that we are all one in God.

Our nation espoused this attitude in the documents we wrote to found our own creation story. "We hold these truths to be self evident," the founders wrote, "that all people are created equal and all are endowed by their creator with certain inalienable rights, the right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness."

Our position was and always has been that there should be no difference in treatment of people. Unfortunately, that position has not been lived out. Racism, sexism and many other ism's manifested themselves as people assumed power.

When people are in power, the worldly strong will always dominate and that domination leads to greed and a desire to possess and have power over others. Ironically, when the founding fathers wrote our Declaration of Independence, they were the ones being discriminated against. Today, we have forgotten that fact because histories tend to be written by the victors.

God's creation story is not a history. It is in fact a story of relationship that God desires to have made known so we can put aside notions of power among people and recognize the one true power that exists in God. It is God al one that we are to serve!

Question 5—(Aidan) How does God create people in God's own image and likeness?

As we discussed earlier, God reveals Godself in the very first verses of the Creation Story. We learned there that the word for Spirit in Hebrew also means "breath or wind." When God first created humans, God used the

elements God had already created, the dust of the ground to form and shape them; much, I suspect like God created the other animals. When God was finished, however, God added something that was not added to any other element of creation.

At the conclusion of the creation of man, God looked and saw that it was still a formless, shapeless void much like the very creation of the universe. Then God knelt down and breathed into the man. That breath is the same "Spirit" that brought all creation into being." God breathed God's Holy Spirit into the human and it came to life.

Humans are the only animals who possess this Spirit. We are the only ones that possess the spark of creation breathed into us by God Himself. Because of this, we are in the very Image and Likeness of God. We possess a creative spark given us by God alone.

As the story tells us, this spark gives us great responsibility. We are to be stewards of all the earth and learn to create in the earth the goodness God desires from those who possess God's Holy Spirit!

Follow-up—What did the first people look like?

Given the events of the past few weeks, it is important that we answer this question. By all accounts, the first people appeared in the area around the Mediterranean. People around this part of the world are generally of "darker skin pigmentation" than most of us sitting in the room today.

To be succinct, the first people were probably people of color. This observation does not and should not give anyone a sense of superiority but rather should remind us that all people come from one people and that all people are created by God and invited into their geography given tools such as skin pigmentation that will keep them healthy, and as safe as possible.

People look different because of the different demands of their original environment. They act different because of the experiences they have in life. These are very different realities. What we are invited to learn is that the differences in people are a strength God built into creation so we could use those differences to work together for the "more perfect world" God desires us to be a part of creating.

Question 6—(Hadley) What does it mean that we are to have dominion over all creation

This question really picks up on the last. To have dominion does mean to dominate to the point of subjugation. Instead it means that we provide good stewardship. Dominion is from the Latin for "Dominos" or Lordship. Over time, humans have come to understand Lordship as control and possession.

We have a responsibility to re-think what we know and apply what we know about our Lord. Jesus said, "The first shall be last and the last shall be first and whoever would be leader of all must be servant." That is the teaching of our Lord.

What it means to have dominion over all the earth is that we should serve the earth. WE should care for the environment and the resources of the earth. WE should have respect for all living creatures of the earth. We should genuinely attempt to improve living conditions for all creatures and things.

Dominion means "Lordship," and the Lordship we know is that of service and not subjugation!

Follow-up—When God created, why did God not just make it perfect to start with?

The answer here is not really given in scripture but I believe it is implied. Because God did create us in God's image and likeness, I believe God wants us to be creators with him. I like to think of this in the way Sallie McFague expresses it. We are all created co-creators.

Only God can create from nothing as we have learned this morning, but God gives us the ability to create from that which exists, the power and ability to be better.

This week, as we watch protestors lining the streets, that is their desire. We should join with them, even if we do not march or make signs, we should join with them to make things better.

Perfection is attainable only through God but our effort to renew God's promise of life brings the Kingdom of God even closer. The opportunity we have is to walk together, to work together to live together to create a world where all God's children can, not just get along, but thrive together for a world that is more for our children than we ever imagined it might be.

I believe this is what God has in mind "In the beginning!" Amen!

Lord's Supper

Youth Offering—

God, bless these gifts and let them be used to your glory. We have stood with our brothers and sisters though we were far apart and now we are blessed to come near once again. From our good fortune, may we prepare ourselves to go out and share the good news of Jesus with the world. This we pray in His name. Amen!

Blessing and Sending—May the Lord Bless you and Keep You. May the Lord make his face to shine upon you. May the Lord lift up his countenance upon you and be gracious to you and give you peace!