

Bible Challenge June 11-17, 2017

Advent's weekly Bible Challenge is based upon the readings assigned for each Sunday. The Basic challenge is to re-read the texts that were read on Sunday morning and included in the Sunday bulletin. The Adventure and Explorer challenges are suggestions of different ways to deepen your knowledge of the Bible. The challenge is organized as one reading for each of five days, but find a pace or style that fits your schedule.

INTRODUCTION

June 11 is Trinity Sunday. Though the word trinity is not found in the scriptures, today's second reading includes the apostolic greeting that begins the liturgy: The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all. In the gospel Jesus sends his disciples forth to baptize in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. More than a doctrine, the Trinity expresses the heart of our faith: we have experienced the God of creation made known in Jesus Christ and with us always through the Holy Spirit. We celebrate the mystery of the Holy Trinity in word and sacrament, as we profess the creed, and as we are sent into the world to bear witness to our faith.

DAY ONE: Genesis 1:1—2:4a

This first creation story reached its current form during the crisis of the Babylonian exile of the people of Israel. God, not their captors' god Marduk, was responsible for their existence. God created women and men as rulers over creation, to preserve and protect it. God also rested on the seventh day, hallowing that day forever as the Sabbath.

¹In 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.

^{2:1}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.

Adventure Challenge: Genesis 1-2:4a.

Explorer Challenge: Option A: Read the Wikipedia article on *Marduk*, the Babylonian God.

Option B: Read a commentary on this creation story. (Because we have heard this story many times, we tend to overlook its richness. For example, even the phrase *In the beginning* has grammatical and textual subtleties.)

Option C: Research interpretations of the phrase in the image of God.

DAY TWO: Psalm 8

The majestic strength of the Lord is evident in all the earth! Humans have been given a unique role.

¹O LORD our Lord,
how majestic is your name in all the earth!—
²you whose glory is chanted above the heavens
out of the mouths of infants and children;
you have set up a fortress against your enemies,
to silence the foe and avenger.
³When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers,
the moon and the stars you have set in their courses,
⁴what are mere mortals that you should be mindful of them,
human beings that you should care for them?
⁵Yet you have made them little less than divine;
with glory and honor you crown them.
⁶You have made them rule over the works of your hands;
you have put all things under their feet:
⁷all flocks and cattle,
even the wild beasts of the field,
⁸the birds of the air, the fish of the sea,
and whatever passes along the paths of the sea.
⁹O LORD our Lord,
how majestic is your name in all the earth!

Adventure Challenge: Psalm 8. (Compare with Psalm 33, which identifies the role of justice in God's rule.)

Explorer Challenge: Option A: Compare this psalmist's answer to the question in verse 3, with the response to the same question in Psalm 144:3 and Job 7:17-21.

Option B: Research *hyperbole*. In your judgment, are the statements in verses 6-7 literal or hyperbole? Compare these assertions, for example, with the statements in Psalm 97:4-5. How does our understanding of these verses inform our response to the environment or global warming?

DAY THREE: 2 Corinthians 13:11-13

Paul closes a challenging letter to the Corinthians with an appeal to Christian fellowship grounded in the

triune harmony of Christ's grace, God's love, the Spirit's partnership.

[Paul writes:] ¹¹Finally, brothers and sisters, farewell. Put things in order, listen to my appeal, agree with one another, live in peace; and the God of love and peace will be with you. ¹²Greet one another with a holy kiss. All the saints greet you. ¹³The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with all of you.

Adventure Challenge: 2 Corinthians 12:11 - 13:13.

Explorer Challenge: Option A: Research *the Trinity* or *the doctrine of the Trinity*.

Option B: Compare the conclusion of this letter with that in two or three other Pauline letters; for example: Romans 16:25-27, 1 Cor 16:19-24, Gal 6:11-18. (What are the key similarities?)

DAY FOUR:

Matthew 28:16-20

After his resurrection, Jesus summons his remaining disciples and commissions them to baptize and teach all nations in the name of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

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."

Adventure Challenge: Matthew 28.

Explorer Challenge: Option A: Are you surprised that, even after the resurrection, some of the eleven disciples still "doubted" (verse 17). Compare Matthew 31-33 and John 20:24-29.

Option B: Jesus commands his followers not only to baptize, but also to *teach [the nations] to obey everything that I have commanded you*. What specifically do you think Jesus had in mind to be obeyed? What Biblical texts might you cite as evidence?

DAY FIVE:

PRAYER OF THE DAY

God of heaven and earth, before the foundation of the universe and the beginning of time you are the triune God: Author of creation, eternal Word of salvation, life-giving Spirit of wisdom. Guide us to all truth by your Spirit, that we may proclaim all that Christ has revealed and rejoice in the glory he shares with us. Glory and praise to you, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, now and forever. Amen.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; God's glory fills the whole earth. (*Isaiah 6:3*)

Adventure and Explorer Challenge: Option A: Meditate for 5 minutes, breathing in with the worlds *God's glory fills the whole earth* and breathing out with the worlds *I rejoice in the glory Christ shares with us*.

Option B: Google *NASA images*, and look at some as you repeat the opening of the Prayer of the Day: *God of heaven and earth, before the foundation of the universe and the beginning of time you are the triune God.*