

**Sermon for Morning Prayer:
Trinity Sunday¹**

The Reverend Warren E. Shaw, Priest in Charge

The Lessons:²

The First Lesson: Here beginneth the first Chapter of the First Book of Moses, Called Genesis.³

“In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters. And God said, Let there be light: and there was light. And God saw the light, that it was good: and God divided the light from the darkness. And God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And the evening and the morning were the first day.

“And God said, Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters. And God made the firmament, and divided the waters which were under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament: and it was so. And God called the firmament Heaven. And the evening and the morning were the second day.

“And God said, Let the waters under the heaven be gathered together unto one place, and let the dry land appear: and it was so. And God called the dry land Earth; and the gathering together of the waters called he Seas: and God saw that it was good. And God said, Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb yielding seed, and the fruit tree yielding fruit after his kind, whose seed is in itself, upon the earth: and it was so. And the earth brought forth grass, and herb yielding seed after his kind, and the tree yielding fruit, whose seed was in itself, after his kind: and God saw that it was good. And the evening and the morning were the third day.

“And God said, Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and years: And let them be for lights in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth: and it was so. And God made two great lights; the greater light to rule

¹ This sermon was delivered at the principal Mass on Christmas Day, for which the Gospel appointed is the same as the Second Lesson at Morning Prayer on Trinity Sunday.

² THE BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER xxiv (PECUSA 1928, rev. 1943).

³ Genesis 1: 1—2: 3 (KJV).

⁴ St. John 1: 1-18 (KJV).

⁵ St. John 1:14 (RSV).

the day, and the lesser light to rule the night: he made the stars also. And God set them in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth, And to rule over the day and over the night, and to divide the light from the darkness: and God saw that it was good. And the evening and the morning were the fourth day. And God said, Let the waters bring forth abundantly the moving creature that hath life, and fowl that may fly above the earth in the open firmament of heaven. And God created great whales, and every living creature that moveth, which the waters brought forth abundantly, after their kind, and every winged fowl after his kind: and God saw that it was good. And God blessed them, saying, Be fruitful, and multiply, and fill the waters in the seas, and let fowl multiply in the earth. And the evening and the morning were the fifth day.

“And God said, Let the earth bring forth the living creature after his kind, cattle, and creeping thing, and beast of the earth after his kind: and it was so. And God made the beast of the earth after his kind, and cattle after their kind, and every thing that creepeth upon the earth after his kind: and God saw that it was good.

“And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them. And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.

“And God said, Behold, I have given you every herb bearing seed, which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree, in the which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed; to you it shall be for meat. And to every beast of the earth, and to every fowl of the air, and to every thing that creepeth upon the earth, wherein there is life, I have given every green herb for meat: and it was so. And God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was very good. And the evening and the morning were the sixth day.

God.” We are born again, as we like to say, and that happens when we are baptized, and born of water and the Holy Spirit, as the liturgy says.

St. John says in one of his letters, “Beloved we are God’s children now. It does not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when we see him we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.” This a reference to what our Lord says about a day in the future when what is now hidden will be revealed. St. Paul also refers to that day when he says, “The whole creation is waiting for the revealing of the sons of God.”

But we do not have to wait to become the sons of God. By the aid of the Spirit conferred in baptism and reinforced in confirmation, we can begin right now to reflect in our lives the nature of God and to fulfill His will for us, just as Jesus did. We can rise above pettiness and bitterness and greed and jealousy and despair, just as Jesus did. We can submit to the power of death, as Jesus did, with full assurance that God will raise us up and give us spiritual bodies that are not flesh and blood. But we cannot do any of that until we respond in faith to the gift of Himself that God has given us in the Word made flesh.

“No man has seen God at any time”, says the Evangelist. “The only begotten Son who is in the bosom of the Father, he has made him known.” Since then, everyday has become a day of judgment.

“And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth: we have beheld his glory.”

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St. David’s Anglican Church
Charlottesville, Virginia

December 25, 2010¹

of His glory. The Son of God accepted all the limitations and risks that all of us face. He participated in the struggles, the frustration, the pain, and ultimately the death with which all of us are burdened. But in every circumstance He remained, as St. Paul calls Him, “the image of the invisible God”, the eternal Son, the Word of the Father. His self-sacrifice on the cross reflects the love of God, a love so deep that He was willing to satisfy the demands of cosmic justice by taking on Himself the burden and ultimate penalty of human sin. Such obedience to the will of the Father is what constitutes the glory of the Son. So it is that St. John refers the crucifixion as His “going to glory.” So it is that, as a witness to that event as well as to the Resurrection and the Ascension, the Apostle says “We have beheld his glory.”

The revelation of the glory of God is understood by the Jews to be a day of judgment. Most of us look forward to that day with some trepidation. But St. John declares that the Day of Judgment and the day when the glory of God was revealed occurred on Good Friday. The judgment and the glory were revealed in a way that did not destroy us but rather saved us from the sentence of death pronounced on the human raced in the Garden of Eden.

The Gospel says: “He was in the world, and the world was made by him, yet the world knew him not.” It is in that way that the world has condemned itself. But the Gospel goes on the say: “But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become sons of God.”

I must point out before going further that the term “sons of God” has no sexual connotation whatsoever. It is simply a Gospel idiom that means what I mentioned above. Just as a human son partakes of the genetic makeup of his parents and reflects their nature, so a son of God is a man or a woman who reflects the nature of God.

The sons of God, according to this Gospel, are born “not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of

“Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. And on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made; and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made. And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it: because that in it he had rested from all his work which God created and made.”

Here endeth the First Lesson.

The Second Lesson: Here beginneth the first Chapter of the Gospel According to St. John.⁴

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not.

“There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all men through him might believe. He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light. That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not. He came unto his own, and his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.

“John bare witness of him, and cried, saying, This was he of whom I spake, He that cometh after me is preferred before me: for he was before me. And of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace. For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.”

Here endeth the Second Lesson.

Text:

From the Second Lesson: “And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth: we have beheld his glory.”⁵ In the Name of the Father, and of the ✠ Son, and of the Holy Ghost. *Amen.*

Homily:

In the theology of the fourth gospel, the Word of God and the Son of God are really the same. Just as a human son partakes of the genetic makeup of his parents and reflects their nature, so the Son of God partakes of the deity of the Father and reflects His divine nature.

The words that people speak also reflect and reveal the wishes and character of the people who speak them. In the same way, the Word of God expresses the will and the character of God.

When the Son of God combines His divinity with the genetic makeup of a human mother, the result is St. John’s version of the Christmas story. “The Word became flesh and dwelt among us.”

In the Bible, the Word of God seems to take on a life of its own once it has been spoken. It goes forth from the Father to carry out His will, and it does not return until it has accomplished its mission. The glory of the Word is that it does in fact express, accomplish, and reflect the will of God. So the nature of God can be seen, at least in part, by what His Word brings about.

Those who claim to feel close to God when they look at the stars and the ocean and the mountains and the trees are expressing a Biblical truth. “The heavens declare the glory of God,” as the

Psalmist says. But St. John recalls that in the creation story in Genesis, the world comes into being because God speaks the Word.

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ... All things were made by him; and without him was not anything made that was made.” What comes into being as a result of the activity of God’s Word is declared to be “good”. It is good because it reflects the nature of God.

This same creative Word, this projection of God’s own nature, is what came into the world on Christmas. “And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth: we have beheld his glory.”

We tend to think of God in terms of His otherness. He is not limited by time and space as we are. His knowledge is not limited by what He can see or hear or touch or taste or smell. He is not subject as we are, to injury or decay or death. God is holy and righteous altogether, and if we were to come face to face with that awesome holiness we would be overwhelmed destroyed like an overloaded electrical circuit.

In the Old Testament Moses was permitted to look upon the face of God, but only indirectly and shielded by God’s own hand from the full intensity of the vision. So also Isaiah when he had his famous vision in the temple declared “I am undone, because I am a man of unclean lips and dwell among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts.” It took a special act of absolution to save the prophet from being devoured by the glory of God.

But in Jesus, the awesome otherness of God is filtered, as it were, through a human body so that we are able to see His glory as in union with us rather than as profoundly different.

The Word made flesh, the Son of God, did not exempt Himself from the evils and the ugliness of life in the world as it has become since the disobedience of Adam and Eve. That too is part