

The Master Piece

June 19, 2011

David Duquette

What on earth is God doing? Tornadoes wreak havoc in Joplin, Missouri and Annville, PA. Tanks and troops take up position in the Nuba region of Sudan; the dogs of war are howling in Africa again. This spring's flu bug packs a powerful punch. Hospitals fill with cases of pneumonia and bronchitis; some do not survive.

What on earth is God doing? What can we do? We read about these disasters – large and small – and we feel like there's nothing we can do. We're only human.

Ah, but the Bible assures us that there is no such thing as “only human.” The Psalmist marvels, *Psalm 8:3-6 (NRSV)* ³ *When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars that you have established;* ⁴ *what are human beings that you are mindful of them, mortals that you care for them?* ⁵ *Yet you have made them a little lower than God, and crowned them with glory and honor.* ⁶ *You have given them dominion over the works of your hands; you have put all things under their feet.”* Genesis takes us back to the beginning, *Genesis 1:26-27 (NRSV)* ²⁶ *Then 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.”* ²⁷ *So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.* ²

What on earth is God doing? God is restoring a masterpiece, and we fallible and frail human beings with all of our follies and foibles; we are the master piece.

❶ THE TRINITY – GOD’S WAY WITH THE WORLD

The doctrine of the Trinity is an important way the church answers the questions, “What on earth is God doing? What are we to do?” A central tenet of our faith is that God is the Creator, the father of our Lord Jesus Christ, a powerful presence with us now and always through the Holy Spirit. God is all this and more; anything less is not the God we meet in Jesus of Nazareth.

¹ *The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version*. 1989. Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers.

² *The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version*. 1989. Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers.

The Master Piece

June 19, 2011

David Duquette

Reflection upon Genesis and other texts inspired the Church to develop the doctrine of the Trinity and to identify it as a central tenet; a core belief without which we cannot accurately follow Jesus Christ and call ourselves Christian.

Genesis shows us an earthy God who is not an earthly God. God is not any or in any of the creatures that surround us. This sets us apart from our Hindu brothers and sisters. The sun, moon, stars and earth are also not God. This sets us apart from the resurgent paganisms like Wicca which is very much a part of the Berks County religious scene. It's also why we need not bother read our horoscopes.

Genesis begins "in the beginning" with "a wind from God," whom later reflection identified as the Holy Spirit, brooding over the face of the waters of a dark and formless void. God spoke; later reflection identified Jesus as the Word of God. So we see in Genesis, God in 3 persons, the Speaker, the Message, and the Breath. We see an earthy God who is not an earthly God.

The great 14th century German mystic Meister Eckhart put a lighter touch on the doctrine of the Trinity. "He wrote that God the Father laughed, and the Son was born. Then the two of them laughed, and the Spirit was born. When all three laughed, the human being was born. For Eckhart, the mystery of the Trinity was surrounded by peals of golden laughter at the heart of the universe."³

I invite you this week to look through creation; what do you see? What does it tell you about God? What word to you is whispered in the wind? This week, stop, look, listen, and be blessed by the Holy Trinity.

② THE MASTER PIECE

"What on earth is God doing?" This week, a member of our church entered hospice care. Another member of our church faced the possible loss of his job. Another member was admitted to the hospital thanks to that bug going around. And in the last few weeks, a

³ Carole A. Crumley, "Genesis 1:1-2, 4a: Pastoral Perspective" in *Feasting on the Word: Preaching the Revised Common Lectionary*. Year A. Vol. 3. Gen. Eds. David L. Bartlett and Barbara Brown Taylor. Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 2011. 30.

The Master Piece

June 19, 2011

David Duquette

member of our church has lost his job... has died... and on a brighter note, we have 3 brand new babies in the last few weeks.

Globally, the economy continues to sputter. We're still at war in Afghanistan and Libya. The governments of North Sudan and South Sudan appear poised to go to war to define their future.

And on and on it goes. "What on earth is God doing?" "What can we do?" We're "only human."

The old hymn has it right, "This is my Father's world, and to my listening ear, all nature sings and round me rings the music of the spheres. This is my Father's world, I rest me in the thought, in the rustling grass I hear him pass, God is the ruler yet."

In the face of all of the horrors of history, we trust in the one triune God who is at work within history. We pray as Jesus taught us, "Thy kingdom come, they will be done on earth as it is in heaven." We overcome the temptation to think that we're "only human" by remembering that God became human. *John 1:14 (NRSV) The Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth.*⁴ We are created in the image of God, cared for by God, crowned with glory and honor because we are so close to God!

Human beings are the crown of creation; we are God's masterpiece, and we are God's master piece. We are the only creature given the incredible privilege of working alongside God in creation to restore creation as God would have it. We are the ones given the great commission, *Matthew 28:19-20 (NRSV)* ***19 Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,***²⁰ ***and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.***⁵

God has big plans for this old world. There is much to be done because we are a long way from "thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." But we will get there. God is restoring

⁴ *The Holy Bible : New Revised Standard Version*. 1989. Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers.

⁵ *The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version*. 1989. Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers.

Genesis 1:1-2:4a

Psalm 8

Matthew 28:16-20

The Master Piece

June 19, 2011

David Duquette

this old world one human act of kindness at a time, one mortal thought of another instead of ourselves, one person's choice to do what is right rather than what is easy, one desperate prayer for God's help here or around the world.

These are the tools God has given us to do God's work. By comparison with the weapons of the world, they seem puny. Our cause seems hopeless. But a wind from God is still blowing. The Word of God was crucified and is risen from the dead, trampling down death by death and giving life to those in the tomb. The Creator has not and will not abandon the creation. This is our Father's world! God is the ruler yet!

God is restoring a masterpiece. We can be the master piece. We can live in faith, trusting not in what can be seen, but in what cannot be seen – the Gentle Breeze that sweeps away empires, the Carpenter who demolishes the temples we build for the gods we believe will serve us, and the Dreamer who will not settle for the way it is because the vision of the way it will be is so clear and so sweet.

Henri Nouwen, the well-known twentieth-century Dutch theologian and author, spent many hours gazing upon an icon of the Holy Trinity written by the 15th century Russian iconographer Andrew Rublev. He engaged in this spiritual practice during a particular time in his life of severe depression. He writes about that journey in the little book, *Behold the Beauty of the Lord*. He says that gradually, over many months, through that image, he came to know the Trinity as a Community of Love, a House of Love. In that household there was no fear, no greed, no anger, no violence, no anxieties, no pain, no suffering, even no words, only love, enduring love and deepening trust. It was a house, he said, in which he could dwell forever.⁶

God is restoring a masterpiece. Trust the promise of the Trinity. God has not and will not abandon God's creation. God has not and will not abandon you. This is our Father's world! Be the master piece. Amen.

⁶ Henri Nouwen, *Behold the Beauty of the Lord* (Notre Dame, IN: Ave Maria Press, 1987). In Crumley, 30.
Genesis 1:1-2:4a