Holy Trinity • Genesis 1:1–2:4a • June 15, 2014

Jason Broge
Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, brogej@csld.edu

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How very telling that God continues to be “slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love”! Boldly, we echo the words of the psalmist saying, “These all look to you, to give them their food in due season” (Ps 104:27). God did not withhold his hand of blessing to the people of Israel, and he continues to stretch forth his hand, to give us our daily bread, and to give us the gift of his Spirit.

In our text, a cloud descends on Moses and the seventy men of the elders. Instead of a crack of thunder, a bolt of lightning, and torrential rains to sweep them away, the Lord comes down in the cloud and gives them a gift. The same gift of the Spirit given to Moses is now shared with the seventy. Moses loses none of his gift, but as one candle lights another, the Spirit is given to each and they all begin to prophesy. This is God’s gift to his people to be a blessing to others.

New gifts! The presence of the Lord! More blessings! A time for repentance and renewed zeal for ministry? Not quite. The Lord chose to also give this gift to Eldad and Medad who had not shown up for the meeting that day. This caused Joshua much angst because, well, why should they have a special and powerful gift when they do not appear to be, by human measurement, worthy of such gifts. Joshua saw himself as being more worthy than they. Joshua, Moses’s servant since his youth, was displeased that God would give this gift to those with fewer years of experience.

On this day of Pentecost, we pray in the Collect, “O God, on this day, You once taught the hearts of Your faithful people by sending them the light of Your Holy Spirit. Grant us in our day by the same Spirit to have a right understanding in all things and evermore to rejoice in His holy consolation.” Today we celebrate God’s faithfulness to the Israelites, to Moses, to his church throughout the ages. We rejoice that God continues to gift his church with all things needful. We repent for being ungrateful when God’s hand stretches forth and provides abundantly all that we need for body and spirit. We repent for the times we look at other baptized brothers and sisters and become jealous of how God has blessed them. Today, on a day of great celebration, and renewed by the Spirit, we pray God will use each of us to tell of his marvelous blessings.

William Wrede

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Editor’s note: at concordiatheology.org this homiletical help includes a sermon outline.

As with any pericope there are a number of directions a sermon based on this text could take. When one considers the average parishioner’s familiarity with the creation account—and given that this is Trinity Sunday—one is also confronted with the reality that people will bring expectations to the service and the sermon in particular. A close reading of the biblical narrative reveals a stark contrast between the creation account in Genesis 1 and the rest of the Old Testament of God’s feelings towards man. Take Genesis 6:6–7 for example:
And the LORD regretted that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him to his heart. So the LORD said, “I will blot out man whom I have created from the face of the land, man and animals and creeping things and birds of the heavens, for I am sorry that I have made them.

Much has evidently changed. In five short chapters we have moved from the repeated refrain “it is good,” a refrain culminating in the Creator who steps back and declares it is “very good,” to regret over creating man and being grieved to the point of destroying not just man but much of the wider creation he delighted in. The problem may have begun with one man, but its effects have spread to the point where God decides to blot out not only man but “animals and creeping things and birds of the heavens” as well.

This impulse to undo his creation is not limited to the flood. While God promises not to destroy the world in flood again, he does bring destruction upon man and creation due to his anger over their sin. Consider Sodom and Gomorrah where God razes not only the city but “what grew on the ground as well,” or his repeated threats to destroy his own people (Exodus 32, Numbers 16), to say nothing of the repeated depictions of the “Day of the Lord” throughout the writings of the prophets.

The key to a sermon following this theme is an exploration of how God is able to declare once again that his creation is good. On Trinity Sunday, a poignant text to help with this would be one usually reserved for the cold of winter, that text of the baptism of Jesus. As the Father’s Son—he who was there at the beginning and through whom all things were made—stands in a river being baptized, the heavens are torn open, the Holy Spirit appears in the form of a dove, and the Father declares, “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased,” (Mt 3:17). It is through this man, the new Adam, that God steps back and declares of his creation “it is very good.”

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Proper 7 • Jeremiah 20:7–13 • June 22, 2014

Conflicting Messages

On this day the church in worship ponders God’s “unfailing love” (gradual) and “never-failing providence” (collect). The church prays to God to put away from her all hurtful things and provide for her all things profitable. As in the prophetic words of Jeremiah, in Matthew 10 our Lord’s words ring true that the Lord’s faithful will face persecution from authorities and betrayal from family for his sake and the gospel. Matthew 10:22 reads, “All men will hate you on account of me, but he who stands firm to the end will be saved.” Altogether, the thought of the day calls for confidence in the word amid the conflicts endured by God’s people.

Notes on the Text

Jeremiah, like other prophets, was directed to employ symbolic acts to accent the message God has for the people. Our text follows the account of the prophet smashing