

June 11, 2017
Psalm 8:1, 3-9

“Who Will Save Us From Ourselves”

John Wesley United Methodist Church
Rev. Rebecca Mincieli, 508-548-3050

I want to read you a letter from a man who suffered a terrible accident and had to write to his insurance company to get his settlement. He wrote: “Dear Sir: I am writing in response to your request for more information concerning line number eleven on the insurance form which asks for the cause of my injuries. I put, ‘trying to do the job alone.’ You said ‘trying to do the job alone’ was insufficient and that you needed more information in order to process my claim. So I trust the following will explain the situation more clearly. I am a bricklayer by trade and on the date of the injuries I sustained, I was working alone laying brick around the top of a four-story building. Upon completion of the job, I realized I had about five hundred pounds of bricks left over. Rather than carry all the bricks down by hand, I decided to put them into a barrel and lower them by a pulley which was attached to the top of the building. I secured one end of a rope at ground level, went to the top of the building, loaded all the bricks into the barrel, and swung the barrel out with the bricks inside. I then went down to ground level and untied the rope, holding it securely to insure the slow descent of the barrel and the five hundred pounds of bricks. As you will note on line six of the insurance form, I weigh two hundred pounds. You can imagine my shock at being jerked off the ground so swiftly, and I lost my presence of mind and became entangled in the rope. Between the second and third floors I met the barrel coming down. This accounts for the bruises and lacerations on my upper body. Still entangled in the rope, I proceeded rapidly up the side of the building, not stopping until my right hand became jammed in the pulley. This accounts for my broken fingers. Despite the pain I tried to untangle myself, but to no avail. At approximately this moment however, the barrel of bricks hit the ground and the bottom fell out of the barrel. Devoid of the weight of the bricks, the barrel now weighed only fifty-five pounds. I again refer you to line number six and my weight of two hundred pounds. As you might surmise due to the difference in weight and the force of gravity, I began a rapid descent. In the vicinity of the second floor I met the barrel coming up. This explains the injuries to my legs and lower body. Slowed only slightly, I continued my descent, landing on the large pile of bricks now laying on the ground, spraining my back and suffering various internal injuries. I am sorry to report however, that at this point, due to further shock, I again lost my presence of mind and began untangling myself from the rope, this time at which I was successful. That’s when the empty barrel crashed down upon me. And this accounts for my numerous head injuries. I trust this letter answers all your questions. And as I sit here, all wounded and battered, please be assured that I will never again try ‘to do the job alone.’”

You see, when it comes to doing a difficult job like handling five hundred pounds of bricks, or an even more difficult job like living out a lifetime on this earth, it's probably a good idea that we never try to do the job alone. That's good advice, don't you think? And, fortunately, as Christians, we are never alone. We have a Triune God who is always with us to help us. Today, throughout Christendom, we celebrate Trinity Sunday. Where we are called to celebrate the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Or, as I say during the benediction, our Creator, our Redeemer, and our Sustainer. Now, trying to understand the Trinity is difficult for many – Three separate beings, but one God. Some have tried with illustrations, like a tree – made up of roots, trunk & branches and leaves – three different parts, all one tree. But that doesn't really do the Trinity justice. And even words can't convey the magnificence of the Trinity. We heard the Psalmist this morning look out at God's creation and up into the heavens at the moon and the stars, and in trying to describe it all, was completely humbled. And St. John ends his gospel testifying to Jesus Christ, with a sense of awe when he say, "There are also many other things Jesus did; that if every one of them were written down, I suppose that the world itself could not contain the books that would be written." And last week we tried to explain the Holy Spirit as God's invisible, mysterious, breath-like presence, filling us and guiding us through life with his gift of truth and wisdom.

But in preparing for today's sermon, I found a video that I think can help put the Trinity into some perspective. Now whereas the psalmist looked out from the earth, this clip begins with a picture looking in at the earth. It was taken by the Voyager spacecraft when it was some 300 billion miles away. Did you get that - 300 billion miles away. And the earth appears as just a tiny pale blue dot, a pixel. And due to the refraction of the light off the camera, it appears as a pale blue dot suspended in a sunbeam. During the clip, the late Dr. Carl Sagan, a world renowned astronomer and astrophysicist, narrates.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vtgy6uzgckc>

Now I think we could all agree with what Sagan said about this planet we call home. About all the collective joys and sorrows, the heroes and inventors, the saints and sinners; about the fervent hatred, the imagined self-importance, and delusions of privileged position. Yet, about this earth being a place so precious that we have no choice but to preserve and cherish it. But Sagan made one comment that glaringly stood out for me. He said, "there is no hint that help will come from elsewhere to save us from ourselves." Now Sagan was very knowledgeable, but he was also a professed agnostic. Not an atheist, meaning he didn't believe in God, but an agnostic, meaning he couldn't prove or disprove that

God existed. But that's what scientists do. They spend their lives hypothesizing, trying to prove or disprove things. But believing in God is different. We don't prove God – we have faith in a God that is beyond our human comprehension. And, in fact, this may be the highest form of human knowledge. Because we, who have faith, can answer the question Sagan could not. We know there is help to save us from ourselves. We do not have to 'go it alone.' That's why this video puts the Trinity in perspective.

Because just look at God, the first being of the Trinity – the Creator, not only of this beautiful pale blue dot we call earth, but the entirety of all creation. Consider these facts. Our solar system, which consists of the Sun and earth and the other planets, can be likened to the size of a quarter when compared to the size of our galaxy, the Milky Way, which would be the size of the North American continent. And by today's best scientific estimates, the entire universe contains hundreds of billions of other galaxies. And so, consider how big, how intelligent, how powerful, how indescribable must our Creator God be. And a God who has that kind of power to create all the wonders of the universe, certainly has the power to work wonders in our lives. And the Bible assures us that this very same God loves each and every one of us, and calls us His children. It says God formed each one of us in the womb individually, specifically, uniquely. And we know this is true just by looking at the people around us. Everyone created with different talents, appearances, personalities. And Jesus said, God knows the number of hairs on every head. God knows when a sparrow falls to the ground. God knows all our needs. And this great, awesome God of the universe loves you and me! Loves us all so much that He wanted to save us from ourselves.

Which leads to Jesus Christ, the second being of the Trinity, our Redeemer. The one whose name means, "save them from their sins." Because through Jesus' teachings and example, we can learn how to live peacefully, joyfully, rightly. We learn how to have compassion when we would rather not be bothered, how to be peaceful when our anger burns, how to forgive when our hurt feels so deep, how to serve others when our own needs loom large, how to love when others seem so unlovable, how to trust in God, even when we don't understand. And because of Jesus' death and resurrection, we know that there is no wound so deep, no past so battered, no relationship so broken, no dream so unfulfilled, that it can't be brought to new life. Until that time when we have eternal life with God in heaven. And then, when Jesus' time on this planet was over, he promised he would send us a helper, assuring us we don't have to go it alone.

The Holy Spirit, the third being of the Trinity – our Sustainer. Remember last week, Jesus described the Holy Spirit as the Spirit of Truth. All the truth and wisdom we need to sustain us in this life is God's gift to us if we allow his Spirit, his power to fill us and shape us. How else can we have that strong foundation, that will allow us to build our house on a rock, rather than sand. That's why the Bible says, "Make you ear attentive to wisdom and incline your heart to understanding, then you will find the knowledge of God. Then you will understand righteousness and justice and every good path. Trust in the Lord with all your heart and do not rely on your own insight." God's Holy Spirit, assuring us that we are never alone.

You know, though he might not admit it, Sagan was in many ways, echoing the Psalmist today. What are human beings, what are mortals, in the scope of all that is in the heavens and universe. And yet, as the psalmist says, God has crowned us with glory and honor, and makes us rulers over his creation here on the pale blue dot we call home. What a mighty, loving, Triune God we worship.

Let us pray: Thank you Almighty Triune God for making this incredible universe. Thank you for being all powerful, all-knowing, and ever present. Thank you for crowning us with glory and honor. Thank you for making us just a little lower than yourself and loving us as your children. Yes, Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth, indeed! Amen.