

“Created for Good”
May 31, 2026
Scripture: Selections from Genesis 1; Matthew 6:24-34

I took some liberties today with the lectionary. This is Trinity Sunday, a day set aside to highlight and celebrate the Doctrine of the Trinity. It's odd to have a designated Sunday celebrating a doctrine instead of a biblical event, like Jesus' birth or the resurrection or like last week, Pentecost. The Bible doesn't actually talk about Trinity. There's not one reference to God as “three-in-one” in the entire Bible. Today's assigned gospel reading in the lectionary is Matthew 28:16-20. That's the only place where Jesus uses the phrase “Father, Son and the Holy Spirit” in the gospels. I have nothing against the Trinity, but it's not something easy to define. In fact, it's been the source of all kinds of conflicts in the Church for centuries. When the Western Church added the word “filioque,” which means “and the Son,” claiming the Holy Spirit proceeds from both the Father and the Son, to the Nicene Creed in the 6th century the stage was set for the eventual East-West Schism of 1054. That wasn't the only reason, but it didn't help.

During the Reformation, when John Calvin wrote his theological masterpiece *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, he sums up his discussion about the Trinity by saying, “Say that in one essence of God there is a trinity of persons; you will say in one word what Scripture states, and cut short empty talkativeness.” He then observes when it comes to controversies, “But I have long since and repeatedly been experiencing that all who persistently quarrel over words nurse a secret poison.” In the end, the language of Trinity is a way to describe the nature of God, and we prove over and over that we really don't have words that are adequate to describe God's nature fully.

So, I decided to use a different gospel reading this morning and to tailor the Genesis reading from what was assigned, which had been the whole first chapter and a few verses from the second. You're welcome. I think this passage from Matthew and reading the first chapter of Genesis this way highlights what we most need to know about God's nature. God creates. In Genesis we learn that nothing is destroyed in order for God to fashion the universe and all of life on our planet, including us. It unfolds as an expression of God's presence. Wherever God goes, life emerges, not reluctantly or begrudgingly, but joyfully. It is God's delight to create. What do we hear over and over in that story? “It was good...it was good...it was good...it was good...it was good...it was good...indeed, it was very good.” All of creation proceeds from God and all of it is good. And that includes you and me.

We, too, are part of God's good creation; we, too, are created for good. This is why Jesus insists that God will not abandon us in our need. Because God is good and all God creates is good, we are part of God's concern. So we have no reason to worry or be anxious. We have no reason to spend our time chasing after wealth or security, doing all we can to protect ourselves from any threat, real or imagined which are always so much worse. We can turn our attention to other, more worthy pursuits. We can pursue God's kingdom and cultivate God's righteousness, within ourselves and in the world around us. We can become partners with God in creating, working to reflect God's goodness in our care for each other and for the planet.

I've been spending time this week reading Pope Leo XIV first encyclical titled "Magnifica Humanitas," or Magnificent Humanity. He discusses our creation in God's image which confers on humanity a special obligation to direct our efforts toward the well-being of creation. He points out that our technological development carries the potential to do immense good for all but also to do harm. How we use our capacity to manipulate technology and the environment can have far-reaching affects often unintended yet undeniable. So, our responsibility is to pursue those advances with intention and great care.

Leo uses two biblical images to help illustrate his concern. The first is the story of the Tower of Babel that takes place following the flood narrative and describes a humanity that seeks to express its power over the environment through building a monument to itself that can reach to the heavens. God's response is to scatter the people of Babel and to mix up their language so they can no longer communicate with each other and plan that kind of assault on the heavens again. In Leo's interpretation the people of Babel are prevented from pursuing a culture of power and dominance represented by the Tower.

The second image he uses as a contrast is the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem after return from exile in Babylon in the Book of Nehemiah. When Nehemiah returns to Jerusalem and sees the rubble left from Babylon's destruction of the city, he organizes the people in cooperative groups to rebuild different sections of the wall, giving them a sense of purpose and a unifying vision for the future.

Pope Leo describes our current situation as a choice. On the one hand is what he dubs "the Babel syndrome," defined as "idolatry of profit that sacrifices the weak, a uniformity that neutralizes differences, and the pretense that a single language—even a digital one—can translate everything, including the mystery of the person, into data and performance." On the other hand is the "way of Nehemiah," which emphasizes cooperation and the common good. As he writes, "Rebuilding today means recognizing that, precisely from the plurality of voices and visions which, even though they sometimes remind us of the confusion caused by the diversity of spoken languages, a bright possibility emerges."

The contrast as I see it boils down to whether we act out of anxiety or hope. When we operate from anxiety, the worry Jesus calls us to abandon, we close in on ourselves. We seek like-minded allies and reject those who disagree. We gravitate toward uniformity and certainty and run from ambiguity and diversity. We become driven by our fears and our capacity for creativity is lost. What we do construct is only to fortify ourselves, to protect us from threats and secure our control over others and our environment. The world we imagine in our anxiety is bleak and sordid where only the strongest and most wealthy are allowed to excel while the weak, the poor and marginal are left to suffer.

But when we embrace hope, when we set our sight on a future where everyone and all creation can flourish, we become open to the variety of voices and concerns that allow us to see one another more clearly and appreciate what each of us has to offer for the good of all. Hope says even when life appears out of control and uncertain there is the possibility of light in our darkness so long as we hold fast to our humanity and ensure that others around us can be heard and seen. Hope encourages us to cling to each other through cooperation rather than pushing

each other away as a competitor. Life isn't meant to be a contest. We're created for good and not harm.

How we do that, how we live for each other and not in endless conflict, is discovered as we immerse ourselves in the teachings of Jesus and the presence of God. That may sound simplistic or naïve, but there's nothing harder in a world that encourages conflict and dominance than seeking to embody Christ's compassion and God's creative love. We are called to reveal hope in a world filled with despair. And it's up to us to do it. When Jesus talks about our heavenly Father supplying our needs, the way that's done is through the network of relationships we share. Our needs are supplied by the generosity and empathy of those around us whom God has given to support and sustain us. That's to say, we need each other if we want to fulfill our purpose as creatures made in God's image.

And when it comes to how we create and use technology, the good it can bring depends on our willingness to keep that image uppermost in our planning. In his encyclical Pope Leo writes, "let us establish standards for discernment—the dignity of the human person, the universal destination of goods, the preferential option for the poor, care for our common home and peace—and let us translate these standards into practices such as responsible planning, the assessment of human and social impact, the inclusion of the most vulnerable, the promotion of digital literacy and guiding research and industry toward justice and peace." He, along with many other observers, sees the potential for great harm in the current ascent of AI technology in our society. When people are reduced to data points and efficiency is elevated above solidarity and inclusion, we risk the possibility that the most vulnerable will be left in the dust, sacrificed to the idol of progress.

In our fascination with the abilities of this technology we can become callous toward those whose lives are impacted negatively. We may start to regard people as obstacles to be overcome rather than partners in progress toward a common destiny. As Pope Leo writes, "In the era of artificial intelligence, when human dignity is threatened by new forms of dehumanization, ours is the pressing duty to remain profoundly human." That responsibility won't diminish as AI reaches more deeply into our lives; it will only become more pressing.

So, we need to be clear within ourselves about our identity as God's creation. We need to be clear that we are created for good and not harm. We need to be clear that our hope lies in a generous and loving God who cares for us as a parent for a child and calls us through the life of Christ to embrace one another with generosity and compassion and inspires us through the Spirit to live in cooperation and community with each other and the whole creation. No form of technology, however useful and efficient, can be a substitute for the connection we have in God's love for us and the goodness at the core of our creation to relieve our anxiety and fill us with hope. We have no reason to despair. We are God's own creation, created for good, and carry within us God's hope for the world.

Amen