

the one God – Father, Son and Holy Spirit. It is not a ritual but a transformation from the old life to the new, empowered to live it for Jesus, receiving the Father's love, knowing the reality of Jesus in their lives, and being spiritually renewed. Despite cruel persecution, the early church grew very rapidly – because this is the way it is designed to work.

QUESTION *How might we grow more aware of the slightly different relationships we enjoy with Father, Son and Holy Spirit?*

2 Cor. 13:11-14 – Christians carry with them grace, love and fellowship

Through Jesus we find God's love and the oneness of the Holy Spirit

11 Finally, brothers and sisters, rejoice! Strive for full restoration, encourage one another, be of one mind, live in peace. And the God of love and peace will be with you.

"Finally – Paul's final words in a letter about resolving relational difficulties urge living the life of the Spirit joyfully. The Holy Spirit leads into unity with generosity of attitude and a disposition to build others up, and bring out what God has put in them.

12-13 Greet one another with a holy kiss. All God's people here send their greetings.

"Holy kiss... God's people" – literally the hagio kiss of the hagioi, the welcome of the saints. The custom for family reunions was, uniquely in the church, a way of showing acceptance, love and freedom from judgment, bridging differences of race, social standing and gender.

14 May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

"Grace... love... fellowship" – Paul varies the more familiar order to show that through the grace of Jesus, we come to experience the love of God, and receive the Holy Spirit. At the end of a letter dealing with conflicts at Corinth, he gives a formula for the solution.

REFLECTION The special sense of belonging and oneness with other Christians creates a feeling of family that includes all the rich diversity that we bring as varied individuals. And so family-style greetings need no encouragement. But that togetherness and affinity is the very area the devil will try to damage, and the as-yet-unrenewed carnality and competitiveness of the Corinth Christians opened that door to trouble. We can read all about it in Paul's letters, but the end of his final letter summarises with the remedy: grace towards others, like Jesus, with unconditional love, like the Father, is what releases the genuine fellowship that only the Holy Spirit brings, and leaves little room for the enemy to sow strife.

QUESTION *What does it look like to do as Paul says, to "encourage one another"?*

PRAYER Father, I can draw near to You through knowing what Jesus has done for me, and my halting utterances become prayers of praise and joy and every other expression as I allow Your Holy Spirit to lead me. May I grow in Your kind of unconditional love, and learn to treat others preferentially as Jesus does – and be a disciple who is always learning the trade with Jesus, and encouraging others to be on His team. Your kingdom come! Amen.

The Living Word, Wednesday for the following week – www.thelivingword.uk

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www.glowweobley.com – join others in the latest suggested prayers
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The Living Word

www.thelivingword.uk PRINT EDITION
Bible readings for Sunday, June 7, 2020, with explanatory notes

Bible study on the Revised Common Lectionary passages for **June 7**
Prepare by reading the Bible passages beforehand – read again to reflect on the pulpit teaching

Trinity: **The three Persons of God at work in creation, mission and fellowship**

Genesis 1:1-2:4 – God speaks into existence the world and its rhythms

Matthew 28:16-20 – Disciples of Jesus are from all kinds of people

2 Corinthians 13:11-14 – Christians represent three persons of the one God

Genesis 1:1-2:4 – God speaks into existence the world and its rhythms

Everything created was good, and also man in God's image

1-2 In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters.

"In the beginning God" – God exists, and existed before creating the universe.

"God created" – God is the plural subject of a verb in the singular, a mysterious twist which could allude to the Trinity. The word bara used for "created", literally 'fashion anew', is only ever used of God.

3-5 And God said, 'Let there be light,' and there was light. God saw that the light was good, and He separated the light from the darkness. God called the light 'day', and the darkness He called 'night'. And there was evening, and there was morning – the first day.

"And God said... and there was" – the absolute power of God, creating in His very words.

"Let there be light" – a principal theme of the Bible is that God puts light into darkness and confusion, here in the creation of the daily and weekly cycle.

"The light was good" – everything God does or creates comes out of His innate goodness, also vv. 10, 12, 18, 21, 25.

6-8 And God said, 'Let there be a vault

between the waters to separate water from water.' So God made the vault and separated the water under the vault from the water above it. And it was so. God called the vault 'sky'. And there was evening, and there was morning – the second day.

"Vault" – expanse; the root meaning is a beaten metal covering or dome.

• **For further study**, "hard as a mirror" and "like a canopy", Job 37:18, Isaiah 40:22.

9-10 And God said, 'Let the water under the sky be gathered to one place, and let dry ground appear.' And it was so. God called the dry ground 'land', and the gathered waters He called 'seas'. And God saw that it was good.

"Gathered" – God brings order out of chaos with the three domains of sky, sea and earth. The flood of Genesis 6 reverted for a time to the previous chaos.

11-13 Then God said, 'Let the land produce vegetation: seed-bearing plants and trees on the land that bear fruit with seed in it, according to their various kinds.' And it was so. The land produced vegetation: plants bearing seed according to their kinds and trees bearing fruit with seed in it according to their kinds. And God saw that it was good. And there was evening, and there was morning – the third day.

"Plants bearing seed... trees bearing fruit" – creation, fruitfulness and reproduction are set in place for human and animal life to come.

14-19 And God said, 'Let there be lights in the vault of the sky to separate the day from the night, and let them serve as signs to mark sacred times, and days and years, and let them be lights in the vault of the sky to give light on the earth.' And it was so. God made two great lights – the greater light to govern the day and the lesser light to govern the night. He also made the stars. God set them in the vault of the sky to give light on the earth, to govern the day and the night, and to separate light from darkness. And God saw that it was good. And there was evening, and there was morning – the fourth day.

"He also made the stars" – neighbouring cultures worshipped the stars but God made them.

20-23 And God said, 'Let the water teem with living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the vault of the sky.' So God created the great creatures of the sea and every living thing with which the water teems and that moves about in it, according to their kinds, and every winged bird according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. God blessed them and said, 'Be fruitful and increase in number and fill the water in the seas, and let the birds increase on the earth.' And there was evening, and there was morning – the fifth day.

"God created the great creatures of the sea" – which pagan cultures held to be co-eternal with their gods. Hebrew tanninim, creatures, elsewhere refers to crocodiles, powerful monsters or Leviathan – created by God and subject to His sovereignty.

24-25 And God said, 'Let the land produce living creatures according to their kinds: the livestock, the creatures that move along the ground, and the wild animals, each according to its kind.' And it was so. God made the wild animals according to their kinds, the livestock according to their kinds, and

all the creatures that move along the ground according to their kinds. And God saw that it was good.

26 Then God said, 'Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.'

"Let us make" – God speaks for His heavenly court of angels, with language that foreshadows the Trinity, an understanding that came much later in God's progressive revelation.

27 So God created mankind in His own image, in the image of God He created them; male and female He created them.

"In our image" – each living part of creation is designed to reproduce "according to their kinds" and God's supreme act of creation is creating mankind to share His attributes and qualities, including the rule of His creation, vv.28-29.

28 God blessed them and said to them, 'Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground.'

"Rule over... every living creature" – in ESV, "subdue... and have dominion", investigating and finding the earth's resources: a mandate for responsible scientific and technological development that respects God's intentions. The strong term "subdue" (compare Zech. 9:15, Micah 7:19) conveys managing with God's authority, perhaps foreshadowing sin and Satan's attempts to gain control, which will need determined stewardship. Jesus' saying about "violence" coming on God's good order may reflect this, Matt. 11:12.

29-30 Then God said, 'I give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food. And to all the beasts of the earth and all the birds in the sky and all the creatures that move along the ground – everything that has the breath of life in it – I give every green plant for food.' And it was so.

"I give you every..." – repeating "every" and "all" emphasises the abundance of God's provision.

31 God saw all that He had made, and it was very good. And there was evening, and there was morning – the sixth day.

2:1 Thus the heavens and the earth were completed in all their vast array.

"Completed" – and perfect, needing no further work or revision, therefore "rest", vv.2-3.

2-4 By the seventh day God had finished the work He had been doing; so on the seventh day He rested from all his work.

REFLECTION Our first picture of the Trinity is of God the creator of the universe, with the creative Spirit of God present and active over the formless waters. Where is Jesus the Son of God? Also present, although not mentioned in the Genesis account. John tells us in the first words of his gospel that Jesus, the Word – or fundamental purpose of God – was with Him in the beginning and instrumental in the creation, John 1:1-3. The climax of this part of the story is the creation of man as thinking and feeling and caring like God, and given authority to manage earth's resources well.

QUESTION *How might we seek answers from the Creator about climate change and pollution and energy management?*

Matthew 28:16-20 – Jesus' apprentices are from all kinds of people

Full of Father, Son and Holy Spirit, they will continue Jesus' work

16 Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go.

"Eleven disciples" – after Judas' suicide, Matt. 27:5.

17 When they saw Him, they worshipped Him; but some doubted.

"But some doubted – The eleven believed, but this tells us that others accompanied them, possibly the appearance to more than 500 mentioned by Paul, 1 Cor. 15:6.

18 Then Jesus came to them and said, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Me.

"All authority... has been given" – confirming

Then God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it He rested from all the work of creating that He had done. This is the account of the heavens and the earth when they were created, when the Lord God made the earth and the heavens.

"He rested" – the basis for the word Sabbath, although that observance did not come until the giving of the Law, Exodus 20:8-11.

Jesus' deity and return to His exalted position as divine Son of God, connecting heaven and earth by His universal lordship.

19-20 Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.'

"Make disciples" – apprentices of Jesus who would learn to follow and do (better rendering than 'obey') what Jesus taught and did helped by the Holy Spirit, like Jesus coaching them in person.

"The name" – singular, not 'names'. This earliest Trinitarian verse means there is one true and undivided God who exists as the distinct persons of Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

REFLECTION The call to be a disciple of Jesus is spelt out in this passage – it is about making other disciples who learn to carry on the ministry of Jesus, who themselves encourage further disciples, and so on. How do we do that? Those who come to a decision to trust what Jesus has done for them and invite Him to be the influencer of their lives will want to enter the water of baptism to celebrate their new life. That, says Jesus, is a transaction of all three Persons of