

Spirit in Partnership

May 31, 2026

Genesis 1:1-2:4a

¹When God began to create the heavens and the earth — ²the earth was without shape or form, it was dark over the deep sea, and God's wind swept over the waters — ³God said, "Let there be light." And so light appeared. ⁴God saw how good the light was. God separated the light from the darkness. ⁵God named the light Day and the darkness Night. There was evening and there was morning: the first day.

⁶God said, "Let there be a dome in the middle of the waters to separate the waters from each other." ⁷God made the dome and separated the waters under the dome from the waters above the dome. And it happened in that way. ⁸God named the dome Sky. There was evening and there was morning: the second day.

⁹God said, "Let the waters under the sky come together into one place so that the dry land can appear." And that's what happened. ¹⁰God named the dry land Earth, and he named the gathered waters Seas. God saw how good it was. ¹¹God said, "Let the earth grow plant life: plants yielding seeds and fruit trees bearing fruit with seeds inside it, each according to its kind throughout the earth." And that's what happened. ¹²The earth produced plant life: plants yielding seeds, each according to its kind, and trees bearing fruit with seeds inside it, each according to its kind. God saw how good it was. ¹³There was evening and there was morning: the third day.

¹⁴God said, "Let there be lights in the dome of the sky to separate the day from the night. They will mark events, sacred seasons, days, and years. ¹⁵They will be lights in the dome of the sky to shine on the earth." And that's what happened. ¹⁶God made the stars and two great lights: the larger light to rule over the day and the smaller light to rule over the night. ¹⁷God put them in the dome of the sky to shine on the earth, ¹⁸to rule over the day and over the night, and to

separate the light from the darkness. God saw how good it was.¹⁹ There was evening and there was morning: the fourth day.

²⁰ God said, “Let the waters swarm with living things, and let birds fly above the earth up in the dome of the sky.”²¹ God created the great sea animals and all the tiny living things that swarm in the waters, each according to its kind, and all the winged birds, each according to its kind. God saw how good it was.²² Then God blessed them: “Be fertile and multiply and fill the waters in the seas and let the birds multiply on the earth.”²³ There was evening and there was morning: the fifth day.

²⁴ God said, “Let the earth produce every kind of living thing: livestock, crawling things, and wildlife.” And that’s what happened.²⁵ God made every kind of wildlife, every kind of livestock, and every kind of creature that crawls on the ground. God saw how good it was.²⁶ Then God said, “Let us make humanity in our image to resemble us so that they may take charge of the fish of the sea, the birds in the sky, the livestock, all the earth, and all the crawling things on earth.”

²⁷ God created humanity in God’s own image, in the divine image God created them, male and female God created them.²⁸ God blessed them and said to them, “Be fertile and multiply; fill the earth and master it. Take charge of the fish of the sea, the birds in the sky, and everything crawling on the ground.”²⁹ Then God said, “I now give to you all the plants on the earth that yield seeds and all the trees whose fruit produces its seeds within it. These will be your food.³⁰ To all wildlife, to all the birds in the sky, and to everything crawling on the ground — to everything that breathes — I give all the green grasses for food.” And that’s what happened.³¹ God saw everything he had made: it was supremely good. There was evening and there was morning: the sixth day...

¹ The heavens and the earth and all who live in them were completed.² On the sixth day God completed all the work that he had done, and on the seventh day God rested from all the work

that he had done. ³ God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it God rested from all the work of creation. ⁴ This is the account of the heavens and the earth when they were created.

Matthew 28:16-20

¹⁶ Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus told them to go. ¹⁷ When they saw him, they worshipped him, but some doubted. ¹⁸ Jesus came near and spoke to them, “I’ve received all authority in heaven and on earth.

¹⁹ Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ teaching them to obey everything that I’ve commanded you. Look, I myself will be with you every day until the end of this present age.”



Welcome to Trinity Sunday! The concept of “Trinity” is a basic understanding of God, Jesus, and Holy Spirit as three-in-one.

Trinity is a way that we can understand and approach God. The

God of the Bible is so multi-dimensional, so nuanced, so complex, so accessible yet so almighty – all at the same time. Words often fail to fully describe who and what God is in the scriptures. At the simplest level, Jesus himself speaks of what we call the Trinity. In our gospel passage for today, Jesus sends forth his disciples *“in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.”* Now, as far as the Biblical witness, that’s about as close as we get to the idea of the Trinity. No prophet, priest, or king mentions it in the Old Testament. Neither Paul nor any other New Testament author unpack this idea of a three-in-one God. And still, the idea of a triune God has become a part of how we understand, relate to, connect with, and live in relationship and in partnership with the Lord our God.

Trinity is not so much a doctrine but an image or an understanding. It is not, as one commentator put it, about two men and a bird. Trinity is about our three-dimensional experience of God. John Wesley speaks of grace in this way. In our Methodist understanding of God's grace, Wesley speaks of prevenient grace, justifying grace, and sanctifying grace. For Methodists, these three graces are not different graces but the working out of grace in our lives in three dimensions. We can think of other things in this way too. Take fire, for example. We can "speak" of fire's heat as one dimension, of its light as another dimension, and of the process by which combustion occurs as yet another dimension.

In the story of creation, we begin to see different dimensions of God. At the core of the story of creation is God's love. This love of God guides each step of creation. Each step was one step closer to creating a place where God could like in relationship and in partnership with humanity. As such, God's love is the creating and organizing energy of the universe. This love is infinite, universal, eternal; it is unvarying, unconditional, and absolute. This love, it once created all that we know. And it continues to create. This love, it came to us in a personal and intimate way too, in the person of Jesus.

As we prepare to delve into this time together, let us pray...

Holy One, loving mystery, we belong in you. We open ourselves to your presence. We are your beloved. We open ourselves to your Word. We are vessels of your Spirit. We open ourselves to be made new in your grace. Speak to us, for we are listening. And now, O God, I ask that you would bless the words of my mouth and the meditation of all of our hearts. You are our rock and our redeemer, our Christ and our king. Amen.

Please turn with me to Genesis 1 as we begin. This is the start of our Christian story. It is our origin story. This poem sets our theology, our understanding of faith, in the story of God's love, creativity, plans, and purposes. To me, this is not a scientific or historical explanation about the beginnings of the universe or the earth. This poem or origin story speaks to the glory of God and to who and what we might be as a part of the whole of creation. These words remind us that we belong to a creator who loves us and breathes life into us and into our world each and every day.

In verse 2 we read that in the beginning, *"The earth was without shape or form, it was dark over the deep sea, and God's wind swept over the waters."* In the original Hebrew, the word translated today



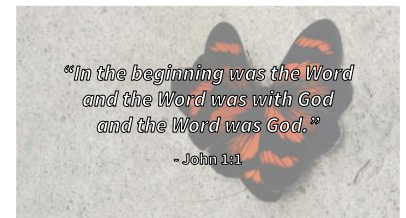
in the Common English Bible as “wind” was *ruach*. This word can also be translated as breath or as spirit. As we focus today on the idea of a triune God, we would read this as *“God’s Spirit swept over the waters.”* As the Spirit swept forth from God, it hovered and moved. In the Hebrew scriptures this movement held a sense of exertion, of trembling or of stirring. Through the stirring of the Spirit, God was bringing life and order to the chaos.

From the beginning, God sought to create order and purpose, life and sustainability. First light was spoken into the darkness, creating day and night. Then on Day 2 God spoke and separated the waters, creating the sky. On Day 3 God spoke land and seas into their place and then spoke plant life into existence. Moving to Day 4, God speaks and the sun, moon, and stars are created. On Day 5 the sea creatures and winged creatures are spoken into being. And then, on Day 6, God first spoke life onto the land: *“livestock, crawling things, and wildlife.”* When all was ready, God then spoke, saying, *“Let us make humanity in our image.”* Giving all of creation to humanity, God looked at this world, declaring it *“supremely good.”*

On the seventh day God rested. This day was blessed as a day of rest, a holy day set aside to develop, cultivate, strengthen, and renew humanity's relationship and partnership with God. With this idea of a Sabbath, we once again turn to our triune God's love for humanity.

In the creation story, we clearly find two dimensions of the Trinity: God and Spirit. But is this a true separation or is it one in the same? Earlier you were asked if there is a difference between you and your breath. The answers, I suspect, were both "yes" and "no." With God and the Spirit, with us and our breath, there is both a oneness and a duality at the same time. A "both" if you will. But the Trinity is not a "both." So where is the third part of our triune God in the story of creation?

In John 1:1 we find the answer to this question. In his beautiful prologue titled, "Story of the Word," John writes this in verse 1: *"In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God."* In the beginning God is there creating. God is the author, the vision-caster. The Spirit is there, moving, stirring, preparing for something to be. And the Word is there, the spoken conduit for creation to happen. Together, our triune God creates the world and all that is in it and on it. This creation, my friends, happens again and again. God, Spirit, and Word are still at work in the world. You and me, we are living proof of this. We are the continuing revelation of God's love in the world. As we live out our faith day by day, God's Spirit in us leads and guides us to be in partnership with the Spirit of God, working in and through us to bring about the kingdom of God here in this time and place.



Turn with me now to Matthew 28. As we consider the whole story of God's work among us then and now, we further develop our understanding of a triune God. In the Genesis story we see the beginning of creation. In Matthew's gospel, we see the end of Jesus' in-the-flesh presence amongst his disciples. As he meets with his disciples for the last time, Jesus first offers them encouragement, declaring, *"I've received all authority in heaven and on earth."* There is nothing outside of Jesus' authority and power. This places the disciples and all who would call on Jesus as Lord and Savior squarely under Jesus' power and presence.

This is important because in Matthew 28:19-20 Jesus invites the disciples there that day and the disciples here today to be partners in God's ongoing creation. He says, *"Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to obey everything that I've commanded you."* The great commission has two parts to it. The first is to *"Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit."* Go into all the world – to Jerusalem, to Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the world. Go and create new believers. Go and incarnate the kingdom of God here on earth, building a kingdom of love, of relationship, of hospitality, of transformation. Go and invite people into the waters of the new creation, in the name of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

And then comes part two of the great commission. We are not done at baptism. At baptism, we've just begun. Jesus tells us, *"Teach them to obey everything that I've commanded you."* Teach these new disciples how to live in community, as Jesus did with his disciples for three years.

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Teach them how to cross barriers and how to build bridges, creating ways to welcome all people into the beloved community. Teach them to care not just for souls but for bodies, for physical needs as well. Teach them how to heal from their own brokenness. Teach them how to find their identity in Jesus and in the body of Christ, not in the world. Teach them how to pick themselves up when they fall and how to pick others up when they have fallen. Teach them how to practice their faith in all parts of their lives, led and guided by the Spirit, worshipping the creator God, and loving as the Son first loved all of creation. Teach them everything. Teach them everything so that we can be one in the Spirit, one in Christ, and one in the Father. May it be so for you and for me. Alleluia and amen.

Grow, Pray, Study

- 1) *Grow*. Teaching others about Jesus often leads to growth in our faith. To whom might you teach Jesus' commands this week? How might this grow your faith too?
- 2) *Pray*. Part of teaching others to follow Jesus comes through our "lived out" witness to our faith. Pray that Jesus shines through in the everyday moments of your life.
- 3) *Study*. Read John 21:15-17. How are these words similar to and different from Jesus' last words in Matthew's gospel? Which did you find easier to follow? Why?